Social Class as Discourse: Mapping the Landscape of Class in Rhetoric and Composition

James Thomas Zebroski

We shall remain or try to remain, at the level of discourse itself, . . . a task that consists not—of no longer—treating discourses as groups of signs . . . but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.

—Michel Foucault

The work of decolonization requires that we change the terms of recognition. . . . The crucial stakes of political struggle are the categories of perception and the systems of classification and conceptualization—in other words, names and phrases—that construct the social world, the real existing world. In this view, we must fight phrases with phrases.

—Lynn Worsham

It is worth considering whether the real civil disobedience must not begin with our language.

—Richard Weaver

Nowadays it is fashionable to talk about race or gender; the uncool subject is class. It’s the subject that makes us all tense, nervous, uncertain about where we stand.

—bell hooks

Sometimes we do not see something until it twinkles in and out of our perceptual field. The most obvious, ever present, and perhaps
most important object or phenomenon quickly becomes invisible in our daily routine, just a part of the given, until something happens to shake up our world and our perceptions. Something like that happens with discourse. Michel Foucault's concept of discourse focuses precisely on this function—on the way language practices regulate, naturalize, and then make invisible certain important concepts and objects, at least until the discourse is disrupted. And something like that has also happened with social class in the United States over the last thirty years. Social class has been naturalized; it has become something obvious yet rarely discussed. Although there has been some recent publicity on the increasing disparity in income between the middle classes—not to mention the poor, and the super-rich—there has been little commentary and less alarm about it. Even though George W. Bush, himself, has recently acknowledged this widening gap between the rich and the poor, social class in America is still, what bell hooks in the above epigram calls, the "uncool subject."

Nowhere has this been more so the case than in rhetoric and composition, which since the groundbreaking work of Richard Ohmann and Ira Shor in the 1970s has everywhere acknowledged the import of class, but which has fled from a larger conversation about writing and social class. It is true that this may be beginning to change. In 1998 Alan Shepard, John McMillan, and Gray Tate pioneered this conversation in rhetoric and composition with their book Coming to Class: Pedagogy and the Social Class of Teachers. Sherry Linkon edited Teaching Working Class in 1999, which while accepting work from a broad range of disciplines had a solid core of rhetoric and composition articles. Julie Lindquist's A Place to Stand: Politics and Persuasion in a Working-Class Bar broke ground in 2002, connecting argument in the working class with argument in academic discourse. By November 2004, social class was becoming important enough to the discipline that College English devoted an entire issue to the study of social class and English. One of the more powerful publishers in rhetoric, the University of Pittsburgh Press, has recently published Who Says? Working-Class Rhetoric, Class Consciousness, and Community,
Almost simultaneously, Donna Dunbar-Odum, a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh program, has contributed *Defying the Odds: Class and the Pursuit of Higher Education*. These and many other works seem to foreshadow a possible change in the importance of social class for rhetoric and composition. Yet, for all this recent stirring, rhetoric and composition has been slow to come to class. This is particularly puzzling given the crucial connections between what we do when we teach and study writing, especially when we teach writing as a vehicle for class mobility, which is the case any time we invoke academic discourse or professional discourse—which is often. When we tell students that they must learn academic discourse to get through the university (and, to be sure, for other reasons as well) and *their* primary reason for attending college is to get a better job and to make a better life than their parents (and, to be sure, they have other motives as well), we in rhetoric and composition are as imbricated in social class as it gets. So the fact that we now have an occasional book or article on social class does not yet match the importance of social class to our work. For all the signs that things may be changing in rhetoric and composition, social class and writing could hardly be considered the hot topic for dissertation research of doctoral students or scholarship of established faculty. Quite the contrary.

With the exception of a short period in the late 1960s and early 1970s when he appropriated leftist rhetoric (Paras 60), Foucault does not seem to be very concerned with social class in his work. Yet, the work that he was doing during this time just before and after the publication in France of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (in 1969) and *The Order of Discourse* (published as a separate book in 1971) helps us to make sense of social class as discourse. What I will consider in this essay is how social class is signified and, more specifically, how we might begin to recast social class in more explicitly rhetorical terms that do focus on the important work done by the language that we collectively use to talk and write about social class. Because it is difficult in our historical moment to articulate social class and, precisely because we in rhetoric and
composition seem to be on the verge of having a long deferred conversation about social class, now is the especially fitting moment to discover a means for examining these processes of signification and the language-specific dimension of class. What does it signify to talk and write about social class?

Social class has many dimensions, but surely one important aspect of it—and the one that arguably is the proper work of English studies—is the way we collectively talk and write about social class. In this essay, I propose that we shift our disciplinary concept of social class from viewing it as an essentially economic or cultural phenomenon, and turn instead to thinking about social class primarily as discourse—or, more properly, as a set of discourses.

By viewing social class as discourse(s)—that is, by viewing the discursive dimensions of social class—we do what we do best: examine the ways language is produced, is used, and has effects on producers and users. In the following sections of this essay, therefore, I will argue five points. First, at the time of Hurricane Katrina, Americans began to talk and write differently about social class—that is, there was a break in the hegemonic discourse of social class that had ruled at least since Ronald Reagan's election in 1980. As the levees around New Orleans collapsed and the surrounding waters flooded the city, so too the ruling discourse of social class was breached and even in the media, new notions of class inundated the conservative claims of the past twenty-five years; such effects are the proper object of study in rhetoric and English. Second, Foucault's concept of discourse provides us with a way to understand this break; his work particularly in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* but also including *The Order of Discourse*, provides us with perhaps our most flexible and helpful instrument at this moment for thinking about social class. Third, discourse as Foucault conceives of it needs to be expanded to factor in emotional labor as articulated in Lynn Worsham's work, because emotion is tied to values and values are often how social class conflicts are made visible in our daily lives and in our work. Fourth, with these concepts of discourse and emotion, we can
begin to theorize social class by mapping, in a tentative way, its landscape of use. And, finally, such mapping helps us to better understand the conflict in the values produced by the discourses of social class and specifically encountered in academe, especially in class-diverse, class-rich settings like first-year writing.

Let me add that the mapping of these discourses is an ongoing project that this essay begins; this essay is more a prologue for such work which when initiated and carried out in our classes and with our students would entail tracking each specific discourse and tracing out its objects, concepts, theories, and subjects constructed, as well as the "rules" and mechanisms of enforcement such discourse requires. Further, I openly acknowledge that this program—and this use of discourse—is one that Foucault himself in the work that followed even in the 1970s soon abandoned; this essay explicitly draws only on the Foucault of the *Archaeology* and *The Discourse on Language* (which was published independently in France as *The Order of Discourse* but which was an appendix to the English *Archaeology*). That may seem, in light of Foucault's later work on discipline and power, as well as the arts of living, problematic. Yet, given the current situation in rhetoric and composition, Foucault's discourse provides a powerful way to change our disciplinary conversation of the last thirty years about social class and perhaps to avoid some of its less productive detours.

In the next section, beginning with the very sense of disruption that emerged from both Hurricane Katrina's devastation of New Orleans and the "discursive Katrina" that followed upon it, I focus on the twilight world when one discourse begins to be washed away and is inundated by other discourses, by juxtaposing brief accounts of some the effects of two nearly simultaneous events on the discourse of social class. One event—a series of articles in the *New York Times* on social class that came out just months before Katrina—is placed next to the post-Katrina coverage in that newspaper but also in other media in order to give a sense of the breach in discourse. This ruling discourse of social class, while frantically restored and still partly in place, weakened for a few weeks in 2005, and, as leaks turned into torrents, for a moment, collapsed.
Social Class, Hurricane Katrina, and the Breach in the Discourse of Social Class

On May 15, 2005, the New York Times published the first article in a series on social class in America. These articles, later collected and published as the book Class Matters, examined social class in terms of its effects on health care, higher education, religion, marriage, and welfare reform. One of the real strengths of the series was that the reporters did their homework as far as the social science of social class was concerned, but, as importantly, they presented their findings in interviews with real people. The stories these people told the reporters were eloquent witnesses to the power of class and to the everyday heroic efforts of ordinary people to deal with it and sometimes to resist and transform it. Still, the decision to commit an entire team of investigative reporters to look at social class in America was not an easy one even for the well established and resource-rich New York Times. Bill Keller in his introduction to the collection notes the difficulties of the subject, even given the rather substantial resources of the Times—fifty contributors were assigned to the project; a year and a half of time was given to do the investigative reports and follow ups. Still, Keller confesses,

I guess it's safe to admit now that at its genesis and at several points along the way this whole undertaking seemed potentially an act of folly. The New York Times has a history of deploying teams of talented people for long periods on big, hard subjects. . . . But from the first stirrings of this project in the late summer of 2003 it was clear that the subject of class was more formidable—vast, amorphous, politically charged, largely unacknowledged. In a country where the overwhelming majority of people identify themselves in polls as “middle class,” there seemed no consensus as to what class meant, let alone whether it mattered. (ix)

"It was the contradiction that fascinated us," Janny [Scott] recalled. 'At a time when by many measures, class seemed less and less a force in American life, it had become more so in some of the areas
that matter most” (xi). In part, the Times dealt with this deep ambiguity of and ambivalence toward social class in American life by accepting it and presenting it. The series in this sense accepted the multiple ways of talking and writing about social class in America.

Janny Scott and David Leonhardt acknowledged in the first article not only the everyday reality of social class but also the attached discursive reality of social class:

The series does not purport to be all-inclusive or the last word on class. It offers no nifty formulas for pigeonholing people or decoding folkways and manners. Instead it represents an inquiry into class as Americans encounter it: indistinct, ambiguous, the half-seen hand that upon closer examination holds some Americans down while giving others a boost. (3)

The series of reports broke ground by putting the issue of social class “above the fold” each week for the readers of the Times. Rarely since the late 1960s and early 1970s has American media raised the issue of social class. If the issue that the Times had examined had been something else, the series might have been greeted with some public acknowledgement of the quality investigative reporting done, as well as the public service the Times performed in raising the issue for policy discussions. As it was, there was surprisingly little discussion of the series or of social class. Even among academics, there was little acknowledgement of the series or of the importance of addressing class. The dominant discourse for talking and writing about (or not talking and writing about) social class remained in place.

Within a few months of the Times series, over the weekend of August 27-28, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. Hurricane Katrina was first and foremost a human tragedy. There was terrible loss of life and property and much suffering. That was the primary reality of Hurricane Katrina. Ralph Blumenthal filed his report on Wednesday, August 31, 2005:

With hundreds of New Orleans residents stranded on the upper floors and roofs by rising floodwater from Hurricane Katrina, rescue teams from around the country mobilized in the gulf area on Tuesday in the largest relief effort since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. . . . The people who were saved emerged with anguished testimony of the human toll. A 95-year-old invalid drowned in her house after her daughter said she could not carry her to safety. "I had to give her mouth to mouth," the daughter, Judy Martin, said after swimming to a neighbor's house and being rescued there on Tuesday." She just said, 'I give up,'" Ms. Martin said of her mother, Cecile Dupont Martin, a former teacher. After being deposited on dry land where the highway emerged from the water and the rescuers launched their airboats and other shallow-draft vessels, Judy Martin dropped to her knees, put her forehead to the pavement and wept. (A 10)

But what compounded the horrors wrought by nature were the human-made horrors, the inability to send help immediately. Some wondered if, in keeping with conservative principles, the decision had been made by the federal government of the world's last superpower to intervene as little as possible.1 To listen to the story of those abandoned in New Orleans in the aftermath of the storm and to watch the hour-by-hour images of death and suffering on television shocked America. As horrendous as the storm effects were, the glacially slow governmental response that compounded the crisis was even more shocking. This second—and in many respects more tragic—event is suggested by an exchange on television's Meet the Press between moderator Tim Russert and Aaron Broussard, Jefferson Parish President:

RUSSERT: Shouldn't the mayor of New Orleans and the governor of New Orleans [sic] bear some responsibility?

BROUSSARD: Sir, they were told like me, every single day, "The cavalry's coming," on a federal level, "The cavalry's
coming, the cavalry’s coming, the cavalry’s coming.” I have just begun to hear the hoofs of the cavalry. The cavalry’s still not here yet, but I’ve begun to hear the hoofs, and we’re almost a week out. . . . The guy who runs . . . emergency management . . . his mother was trapped in St. Bernard nursing home and every day she called him and said “Are you coming, son? Is somebody coming?” and he said, “Yeah Mama, somebody’s coming to get you. Somebody’s coming to get you on Tuesday. Somebody’s coming to get you on Wednesday. Somebody’s coming to get you on Thursday. Somebody’s coming to get you on Friday.” And she drowned Friday night. (Broussard was sobbing at this point). . . . Nobody’s coming to get us. Nobody’s coming to get us. The secretary has promised. Everybody’s promised. They’ve had press conferences. I’m sick of press conferences. For God’s sake, shut up and send us somebody.

RUSSERT: Just take a pause Mr. [Broussard]. While you gather yourself in your very emotional times. I understand, let me go to Governor Haley Barbour of Mississippi. (qtd. in Baker)

Once again the Times captured some of that sense of shock and then anger. This report by Alessandra Stanley was filed on September 2, 2005:

A woman in a wheelchair, her face and body covered by a plaid blanket, dead, and left next to the wall of the New Orleans convention center like a discarded supermarket cart. There were many other appalling images from Hurricane Katrina on Thursday, but that one was a turning point: after three days of flood scenes television shifted from recording a devastating natural disaster to exposing human failures. All morning, cable news networks showed scene after scene of victims, most of them black, stranded without adequate food, water, or shelter, helpless and enraged. Outrage was also in the voices of television reporters on the ground, working with satellite trucks or car batteries and trying to describe the scenes of misery and chaos. . . . It was as those images of mounting desperation and disorder began dominating the screen that Washington suddenly seemed to snap to attention. (A 21)
But help still did not arrive. On September 3, Peter Applebome et al. wrote:

They waited, and they waited, and then they waited some more in 90-degree heat, as many as 5000 people huddled at the highway underpass on Interstate 10, waiting for buses that never arrived to take them away from the storm they could not escape. Babies cried. The sick huddled in the shade in wheelchairs or rested on cots. Dawn Ray, 40, was in tears looking after an autistic niece who had soiled herself and her son who is blind and has cerebral palsy. A few others, less patient, simply started walking west with nowhere to go, like a man pushing a bike in one hand and pulling a shopping cart in another. But most just waited with resigned impatience—sad, angry, incredulous, scared, exhausted people who seemed as discarded as the bottles of water and food containers that littered the ground. (A 25)

Americans were shocked by the inept response to the disaster, as well as by the many images of largely poor, largely African American people stranded, waiting for that help. The prevailing discourse of social class, the ways that until this moment the language of the public discussion of poverty and social class had taken in the United States, were disrupted. While the Times series did not do much to open up a space for consideration of social class back in May and June, the media coverage of post-Katrina in August and September shortly thereafter did—for awhile.

For over twenty-five years, the media and public policy discussions had largely reproduced the conservative arguments about economics, morals, and social class. But then something happened: there was a break in the discourse—in the way we collectively talk and write about social class. The predominate discourse that obscures social class and that had been rarely interrupted through this period began to breakdown very quickly. The way we collectively began to talk and write about social class underwent a shift almost as we were watching television of the events. As the prevailing discourse was breached, other alternative, often older,
discourses about poverty and social class began to flow back into the public arena. What was so amazing to the bystander was how fast that dominant discourse collapsed after Katrina—within a few days before our eyes on the television and in newspaper coverage—and then how quickly, of course, the advocates of conservative causes saw that and rushed in to defend it. To avoid interrupting the flow of the larger argument, I have placed some of the voluminous evidence for this claim in the endnotes.²

Many of us recall that there was an enormous shift in the public discussion on television and in newspapers that was immediate and epic, reminiscent of other historic shifts like the events of 1968 in the U.S. and around the world. Suddenly through September, people were talking about poverty and class and the federal government’s obligation to mitigate, if not solve, the “problem.” Once it was clear that the usual conservative claims of the last three decades would not calm the public, a discursive vacuum was created. Discourses from long ago surfaced in ways that resonated with a sort of cultural déjà vu. It was shocking to actually hear the media pundits talking about poverty and class and the need to consider how we could “solve” this problem. In fact, the proposals offered in response to the increasingly unpersuasive repetition of conservative claims drew shockingly on 1960s rhetoric. Even the President began talking like Lyndon Johnson. Fletcher reports Bush’s words:

Poverty forced its way to the top of President Bush's agenda in the confusing days after Hurricane Katrina battered the Gulf Coast and flooded New Orleans. Confronted with one of the most pressing political crises of his presidency, Bush, who in the past had faced withering criticism for speaking little about the poor, said the nation has a solemn duty to help them. “All of us saw on television, there’s . . . some deep, persistent poverty in this region,” he said in a prime-time speech from New Orleans’s Jackson Square, 17 days after the August 29 hurricane. “That poverty has roots in a history of racial discrimination, which cut off generations from the opportunity of America. We have a duty to confront this poverty with bold action.” (A04; emphasis added)
Large appropriations were promised; new anti-poverty efforts were considered. Was this 2005 or 1965? Even a few conservative commentators, realizing that the dominant discourse had been dangerously breached, began to take up poverty and social class, though carefully shifting the issue from the systemic nature of social class, to individualistic matters of education, family values and morals.

For example, on September 8, 2005 David Brooks wrote that "[H]urricane Katrina has given us an amazing chance to do something serious about urban poverty. That's because Katrina was a natural disaster that interrupted a social disaster." Yet, for Brooks the social disaster of "urban poverty" cannot originate in the social class system per se, in a social class system that unattended and, in fact, enthusiastically deregulated by conservatives for three decades, systematically produced increasing social class divides, but instead resides in the individuals and their moral values alone. In a move that comes perilously close to blaming the victims of Katrina for their being victims of Katrina, he said,

Most of ambitious and organized people abandoned the inner-city areas of New Orleans long ago, leaving neighborhoods where roughly three-quarters of the people were poor. In those cultural zones, many people dropped out of high school, so it seemed normal to drop out of high school. Many teen age girls had babies, so it seemed normal to become a teen age mother. It was hard for men to get stable jobs, so it was not abnormal for them to commit crimes and hop from one relationship to another. Many people lacked marketable skills, so it was hard for young people to learn these skills from parents, neighbors, and peers. If we just put up new buildings and allow the same people to move back into their old neighborhoods, then urban New Orleans will become just as run down and dysfunctional as before.

Is this an example of our "solemn duty to help the poor"? It is hard to be rational toward an argument like this; the assumptions underlying each claim are, to say the least, questionable and hardly new. But instead of engaging with and reproducing such
claims, what we might for the moment more productively do is look at the way social class is constructed in such language.

In this passage from Brooks, social class is constructed as the poor versus all the rest of us, who are the organized and ambitious, and presumably middle class. The undisciplined versus the disciplined. The high school drop out versus the college educated. The immoral versus the moral. The unemployed and unmarketable versus those of us with marketable skills and presumably employed. The culture of the poor rather than the system of economy or the mode of production. Social class, then, in this brief passage is primarily income, education, individual affiliation, morals, and occupation. Yet, we can see from this brief look at his language that for all his supposed facing up to the issue of social class, Brooks is, for the most part, slyly shifting the discourse, returning to the standard discourse of social class, to the dominant way of seeing social class. Social class in the dominant discourse is one's position in the hierarchies of income, education, and occupation, and there is a long tradition of social Darwinism that argues that we get where we are in these hierarchies through moral struggle, through the survival of the fittest, the folks at the top being there because they worked hard and deserve to be there, all things being equal. So what appeared to be a bold move for a conservative commentator of taking up social class, when looked at more closely, becomes a very careful attempt at the restoration of the same prevalent discourse and its values (the welfare queen who drives a Cadillac) that has prevailed since Ronald Reagan. The war against anyone not rich continues unabated through this discourse, making it possible to think of class in such a way as to put forward a legislative agenda that has, among other things, radically cut taxes for the super-rich while incomes of middle and lower class people decline (Tritch).

And, sadly, perhaps to no one’s surprise, in the years since Katrina, New Orleans has faded from view despite the heroic efforts of some media to hold politicians accountable. The levees and the discourse have both been repaired. The breach has been filled. New levees have been installed. Although many reporters
including Brian Williams of NBC returned many times to track the progress or lack of it in the recovery of New Orleans, and while the *Washington Post* ran an article a year later noting that the administration did not fulfill the promises of the time—promises in retrospect one can see were made to fill the breach in the discourse and to stave off critics—the formerly prevalent discourse of social class has returned once again, though in a far weaker form than any time since its installation. One piece of evidence for that claim is that the President's ratings have never fully recovered from their plunge after Katrina. Significantly, Fletcher argues that the President has not returned to his social class discourse of the days after Katrina:

As it happened, poverty's turn in the presidential limelight was brief. Bush has talked little about the issue since the immediate crisis passed, while pursuing policies that his liberal critics say will hurt the poor. He has publicly mentioned domestic poverty six times since giving back to back speeches on the issue in September. Domestic poverty did not come up in his State of the Union address in January, and his most recent budget included no new initiatives directed at the poor.

Other breaches needed emergency repair.

*Lessons from the “Discursive Katrina”: The Importance of Rhetoric in English*

There are many lessons that people who study signification can take away from this discursive breach, among them the speed with which seemingly unassailable discourses fell—more quickly than anyone could have imagined, really within hours of Katrina. Even though the previous discourse was restored, it is damaged, weaker. Intellectuals and other workers in the knowledge industry need to have immediately at the ready alternative ways of talking *and* writing about class in anticipation of new breaches in social class discourse. Part of what academics do—and what we might do in
our composition classes—is to begin to imagine new ways of talking and writing about such central topics in our society. But perhaps more important than these is the lesson that rhetoric and composition plays an important role—even the central role—in the study of discourse, including the discourse of social class that twinkled, flickered, and blinked off and then on, like some power brownout during the days after Katrina.

Rhetoric and composition is in a particularly privileged position to study such language and to do such work as part of its disciplinary project. This not a new idea, and it certainly is not a liberal or left wing or PC idea. On the contrary, this is the nature of rhetoric and therefore of English studies. Richard Weaver, a scholar for the American conservative cause that shaped and supported William Buckley, Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan and the right-wing when they were in the political wilderness in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, argued that rhetoric is always interested, is always at work in the world, like it or not:

All things considered, rhetoric, noble or base, is a great power in the world; and we note accordingly that at the center of the public life of every people there is a fierce struggle over who shall control the means of rhetorical propagation. Today we set up “offices of information,” which like the sly lover in the dialogue [in Plato’s Phaedras], pose as non-lovers while pushing their suits. But there is no reason to despair over the fact that men [sic] will never give up seeking to influence one another. We would not desire it to be otherwise; neuter discourse is a false idol, to worship which is to commit the very offense for which Socrates made expiation in his second speech.³ (24)

Weaver goes on to claim that “just as no action is really indifferent, so no utterance is without its responsibility” (24). Taking up in each of his essays in this book some aspect of the way language works in an important event or in the language of an important person, Weaver notes that the fact that rhetoric is political is hardly news to anyone who has tried to write or talk in public arenas:
All of this amounts to saying what every sensitive user of language has sometimes felt; namely, that language is not a purely passive instrument, but that, owing to this public acceptance, while you are doing something with it, it is doing something with you, or with your intention. It does not exactly fight back; rather it has a set of postures and balances which somehow modify your thrusts and holds. The sentence form is certainly one of these. You pour into it your meaning, and it deflects, and molds into certain shapes. The user of language must know how this counterpressure can be turned to the advantage for his general purpose. (116)

We might term this weight or heaviness of language which we need to apply counterpressure to, discourse.

More recently, Gary Olson has argued that “if postmodern discourse has taught us anything, it is that 'rhetoric' is at the center of all knowledge making, even in the sciences. As a field devoted to how discourse works, composition, then, is perfectly situated to participate in cross-disciplinary investigations of the interrelations between epistemology and discourse” (“Death” 24). Olson further notes that at work in similar cases is “the power of representation and the struggle over who gets to control the creation and dissemination of representations in this culture.” Olson continues:

It seems to me that such struggle is exactly what all of us in rhetoric and composition are concerned with—that in one way or another we are all united in our work with representations, in the production and reception of meaning. That’s why I believe the work we do is exceptionally important. The students we train help determine the future shape of our culture. We offer students the languages and critical faculties to engage in the struggle over representation and thereby empower them to shape the society they will live in. This is why I so passionately believe that rhetoric and composition is much more than teaching students to “express themselves”; it is also about helping them to learn to engage in ideology critique so that the language skills they acquire are relevant not only to their lives but also to their material existence—students can employ these skills to effect real change in their lives. (“Ideological” 82)
One might conclude from these critics, one of the right and one of the left, that language is always political because language practices always play out in specific contexts within specific power relations. The idea that one could study or use language without consideration of power makes no more sense than believing one can use language outside of any situation. Language practices are situated and therefore the idea that language could somehow be separate from politics is anti-rhetorical. Foucault’s discourse always keeps the two—language practices and power relations—together and that is its primary value to English and rhetoric.

**Foucault’s Discourse: Making Social Class Visible**

In order to examine social class as discourse, we first need to carefully describe the concept of discourse we shall use. In this essay, discourse is the power of language practices to constitute the object of which they speak. Discourse is regulated language practice. I am obviously following the lead here of Michel Foucault in his *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, though composition theory began to make use of Foucault’s insights in the late 1980s and early 1990s (see Brodkey, Susan Miller, Faigley, Berlin, Bizzell, Bartholomae).

A rhetorical understanding of Foucault’s *The Archaeology of Knowledge* would strive to place it in the situation from which it arose. *The Archaeology* occupies a pivotal place in Foucault’s work in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is both a retrospective work and a prospective work. It implicitly looks back on the key volumes he had published by this time, *Madness and Civilization*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, and *The Order of Things*, presenting an approach or method, though that is too formalist a term, that loosely ties these together, while also at the same time, presenting in detail a proposal for a wholly new approach to the history of ideas. In a discipline that had overly focused on the “great discovery” and the individualist authors and their individual works, Foucault is proposing that intellectual history or the history of ideas
take a different approach, an archaeological approach — "Neither formalization nor interpretation, but description was the essence of archaeology" (Paras 44). He notes that "Traditional history interprets the representations behind texts, while archaeology seeks to analyze component statements in their coexistence and succession" (Paras 50).

But beyond the disciplinary situation lies the wider intellectual and political context. As Eric Paras shows by examination of earlier reviews by Sartre in the French, the Archaeology volume was also written and published as a specific rebuttal of the criticisms of Jean Paul Sartre, the Marxist and existentialist philosopher, and arguably the most important voice on the French intellectual scene from 1945 to 1968. Sartre’s humanism and individualism, which had dominated French intellectual work for more than two decades, is countered by Foucault’s anti-humanist and systemic argument. Sartre’s over attention to consciousness is countered by Foucault’s banishment of consciousness and subjectivity from his project. Foucault’s Archaeology was part of a wider movement that called for a new generation to take its place on the intellectual and political scene. What we have called the World War II generation was in conflict with what we have labeled the Babyboomer Generation in the late 1960s, no less in France than in the U.S.

It is important to note that Archaeology, and the extremely important lecture "The Order of Discourse," straddles the years of tumult that started in 1968 when student and leftist demonstrations took place in Paris but also across the globe. As Paras proves, Foucault had been critical of Marxism throughout his previous career: “At all times, he refused the expedient of class analysis” (58). But by the late 1960s and early 1970s, Marxist terms begin to enter his vocabulary. Foucault at this time is asked to create a whole new alternative philosophy department from scratch at Centre universitaire experimental de Vincennes (Paras 58–60). In this work, he brings in and is increasingly exposed to Marxist colleagues and their work. Then he is tapped to be professor in the College de France, perhaps the highest recognition one can achieve in the intellectual world in France. He is lecturing in Paris
each year, the very place where the barricades had been defended in 1968. The extremely important lecture “The Discourse on Language,” which begins to stress the support mechanisms that drive discourse and the power relations that enable discourse, is Foucault's inaugural lecture at the College de France in December 1970. There was a certain radicalization of Foucault during this period. While about ten years older than the students of the 1968 generation, Foucault nonetheless affiliated with them and saw his work as offering a new generation's way of thinking about the history of ideas. It is a rhetorical approach in that it is less interested in the intent of the subject than the effects of language practices. His approach is less about the essence of an idea evolving over time and more about the specific conditions under which certain ideas in the medium of language are made possible and others are not. He is less concerned with the great stabilities and continuities and more concerned with breaks, fissures, shifts, changes.

Yet, Foucault's work itself is less characterized by great and sustained systematicity than by abrupt shifts. It is constantly in change as perhaps befits a rhetorical approach, adjusting to new conditions and situations, unconcerned about possible incoherences, discrepancies, or contradictions that develop with previous work. It is a succession of near independent probings into questions (Paras 152). Foucault can abandon an entire approach with no warning or regret; ultimately he abandons archaeology and replaces it with geneology and finally, with the arts of living. The latter turn in the 1980s brings Foucault to an acceptance of the individual that clearly is at odds with the anti-humanist and anti-individualist Archaeology. But such shifts were certainly not worrisome to Foucault, and this essay proposes that they should not concern us too much. Eric Paras concludes, “Part of what this work has attempted to show is nothing could be more unreasonable than the attempt to flatten down Foucault’s thought into a single coherent project” (152). We should then appropriate the Foucault that seems most useful to our situation. When it comes to social class in rhetoric and composition, Foucault's archaeology and his stress on discourse is a welcome contrast to the usual relegation of class
to economics or culture, or individualist commentary. Foucault’s concept of discourse will, it is hoped, allow us to avoid the clichéd binary that structures so much of the scholarship of the last twenty years—whether one studies and teaches writing as language or politics. We study and teach discourse.

The shortest and most precise description of the discourse of discourse that I have so far run across can be found in David Jolliffe’s entry on “Discourse” in the Routledge Encyclopedia of Postmodernism (101–03). He notes that discourse signifies (1) a passage of language, (2) a passage of language that reflects a group’s practices, and (3) the power of language to influence and constrain in a group. This essay works within this third view. Norman Fairclough states that, “Discourse is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning” (qtd. in Jolliffe102). Discourse theory is less interested in reference than it is in the epistemic power of institutional language. Discourses create by constructing, but also by excluding, by making invisible, by prohibiting, by silencing. Discourses regulate. Discourses draw our attention to a certain aspect of the world and in that attending, for a time, create the objects of that world. Discourses are epistemic—that is, they have the power of helping to create the social worlds in which we dwell. But each construction of some aspect of the world entails the exclusion, prohibition, even denial of many other parts of the world and ways of seeing the world. Discourse excludes far more than it produces. A discourse narrows possibilities.

Foucault has much to say about discourse in his Archaeology. Discourse is a practice (46, 68). The study of discourse is not simply the examination of the linguistics of the utterances involved. The study of discourse is not simply the study of the vocabulary, syntax, semantics, logical structure, or rhetorical organization of a text (see 74–76). The theorist analyzes what this language/knowledge/power network produces that is manifested in a text but also across texts and in the gaps between texts. Discourse theory, then, has nothing to do with what in our profession is sometimes called discourse analysis. The study of discourse as part of a broader
archaeology of knowledge presents us with "a task that consists of not—of no longer—treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents and representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (49). Foucault himself carefully distinguishes traditional linguistic and stylistic studies from what he is doing by indicating they have entirely different objects of study and produce entirely different questions:

The question posed by language analysis of some discursive fact or other is always: according to what rules has a particular statement been made and consequently according to what rules could other similar statements be made? The description of the events of discourse poses a quite different question: how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another? (27)

Foucault sees the unity of objects of a discourse (or of a text for that matter) as an effect of discourse. Discourse produces what we within the discourse see as unity and coherence; theorizing a discourse, therefore, begins with unity and looks for gaps, fissures, breaks, openings. Foucault, in a passage that serves well as a summary for Archaeology and a gloss on much of his work before and after, argues that unity is produced by discourse:

We set out with an observation: with the unity of a discourse like that of clinical medicine, or political economy, or Natural History, we are dealing with a dispersion of elements. This dispersion itself—with its gaps, its discontinuities, its entanglements, its incompatibilities, its replacements, and its substitutions—can be described in its uniqueness if one is able to determine the specific rules in accordance with which its objects, statements, concepts, theoretical options have been formed: if there really is a unity, it does not lie in the visible, horizontal coherence of the elements formed; it resides, well anterior to their formation, in the system that makes possible and governs that formation. (72; emphasis added)
Dispersion is Foucault's description of the array that discourse produces; part of the task of the discourse theorist is to describe—to map—this dispersive shape, how certain realms within it are exceedingly well developed and heavily populated while others are vacant. We might well call this "discursive mapping," though we need to distinguish it from the sort of cognitive mapping that Jameson and others advocate. Foucault describes this task at several points. He says, "Paradoxically to define a group of statements in terms of its individuality would be to define the dispersion of these objects. To grasp all the interstices that separate them, to measure the distances that reign between them—in other words, to formulate their law of division" (33). To be sure, Foucault is not especially interested in individual or collective consciousness in this process. In addressing the formation of concepts within the discursive field, he says,

In the analysis proposed here, the rules of formation operate not only in the mind or consciousness of individuals, but in the discourse itself; they operate therefore as a sort of uniform anonymity, on all individuals who undertake to speak in this discursive field. On the other hand, one does not suppose them to be universally valid for every domain; one always describes them in particular discursive fields and one does not accord them at the outset indefinite possibilities of extension. (63)

So discourse is not about the individual agent per se, but rather about the language events in specific institutional environments, as well as the range of practices which are necessary to support that discourse. The idea, then, somewhat common in rhetoric and composition, that an individual decides to appropriate a discourse (or decides not to) simplifies a dazzlingly complex process that goes well beyond the individual and to an extent, pre-exists the individual. We need to remember that the subject, after all, is the effect of power, of discourse, not simply the subject through which power acts (Mills 22).

Further, the study of discourse is not just a study of a set of any old language practices, but rather of regulated language prac-
tices—that is, language practices that emerge from and are controlled by institutions, broadly defined. For example, Foucault studied the practices of psychiatric discourse, medical discourse, scientific discourse (natural philosophy, economics, grammar), and the discourses of sexuality, among others. The focus was on ruling practices and discourses of the powerful. This study of discourse, then, does not focus on everyday individual or personal language, or on the culture of the oppressed. It simply studies regulated language practices, which include language practices within and across institutions. As Susan Mills notes, "The main reason for conducting an analysis of the structures of discourse" is to "discover the support mechanisms which keep it in place. These support mechanisms are both intrinsic to discourse itself and also extra-discursive" (49). By making visible these supportive mechanisms, which include the network of power relations that keep discourse in place and regulate it, we do the very thing that the discourse exists to prevent: we make it visible, we de-naturalize it, its prohibitions, its exclusions and its taboos. We witness to the exclusions the discourse covers up and in that very witnessing, stop—for a moment only, to be sure—the discourse's greatest power: to construct its object (and the world) as an already given rather than as a choice, as law rather than as freedom. In doing that, we begin to disrupt the ability of discourse to produce the seemingly stable, static, natural world removed from human transformation. By thinking of social class as discourse, we do what English departments were set up to do—to study and act on representations that occur in regulated language acts.

Worsham's Study of "Going Postal": Linking Discourses of Social Class to Emotion

To argue that applying a Foucaultian concept of discourse takes us back to the proper role of English and rhetoric and composition is not, by any means, an argument for a return to a formalist study of language. A Foucaultian concept of discourse not only insists on
a rhetorical approach—that is, the necessary linking of text to context, of language to enabling power relations—it also broadens our understanding of language effects. Discourse is profoundly rhetorical in that it is known mostly through its effects. The way these effects have been described in theory for the past two decades or so has included a study of the construction or interpellation of subject positions (Althusser, Belsey), the construction of the objects of discourse (Foucault’s study of the emergence of the patient, of the clinic, of madness, of the incarcerated inmate, of the bodily-controlled free citizen, of sexuality, to name a few), and the construction and enforcement of rules for use (and what is necessarily excluded or even made taboo by such rules—for example, recent studies of the body and of emotion map this very Foucaultian discursive terrain of what has been marginalized and even in some cases forbidden since the Enlightenment).

Over the last decade or so, a good deal of important theoretical work has been done on emotion and emotional labor (including trauma). The binary of intellect/emotion, connected to the binaries reason/emotion and mind/body has been studied in recent years; work has progressed on the very elements of the dominant binaries that have been suppressed. For example, some very important theoretical work has recently been done on emotion including that of Sedgwick and Cvetkovich, and within rhetoric and composition Langstraat, Lindquist, and Murray. In fact, in 2004 two issues of *JAC* (24.2 and 24.3) were devoted to examining one sort of “public” emotion—trauma. Trauma theory, since the advent of AIDS and particularly in light of 9/11, has become essential to understanding public discourse. Yet, of all this important work, Lynn Worsham’s essay “Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion” is certainly one of the landmark works in this area. Because it links emotion (and emotional labor) to current manifestations of social unrest, whether that be “going postal,” and the rise of workplace violence predominantly of men directed at women employees, or the post-9/11 world of trauma in America, Worsham’s essay is central to all of this recent study. In the rest of this section, then, I want to examine a bit more closely at least a few of
Worsham's claims and arguments. In linking Worsham's emotional labor to discourse, my goal is to connect emotion, especially values, to social class. Social class, even in critical theory, has rarely been thought of as discursive and emotional; it is time to see these critical terms in relation to each other.

Worsham's "Going Postal" essay puts forward several complicated arguments; for the purpose of this essay and its focus on the discourse of social class, we should attend to Worsham's claim that emotion is the neglected but master category (224). Worsham says it is important, even necessary, to consider the way emotion locates and anchors us in a way of life; the goal is praxis. Worsham argues, "I seek in theory's various phrasings . . . a different way of feeling, a different sensibility" (219). Worsham begins her exploration of emotion by recounting media examples of employees "going postal"—that is, murdering and injuring "co-workers, often their supervisors, as a way of settling workplace grievances perceived to be beyond resolution or appeal" (213). The term "going postal," which seems to have originated from such attacks in the U.S. Postal Service in the mid-1980s, though such attacks are now observed in a variety of settings, seems to trace increasing and qualitatively new forms of violence in the U.S. Like Foucault, Worsham wants to explore the "bodily rhetoric of violence, its visible and invisible scarification of the individual and social psyche" (215). Applying the concepts of the schooling or pedagogy of emotion in the broadest senses to get at the way emotion is educated in the key institutions of our society including the family, the schools, and the media, Worsham investigates the ways in which emotion is both a social and an individual production. She links emotion to labor (and so to Althusser and Marx) and to social class:

The crucial insight here is that what the working day produces and reproduces as its primary and most valuable product is an affective relation to the world, to oneself, and to others. This is in large part what is meant by the social relations of labor. Going postal will serve as a representative anecdote and guide for the kind of critique I have in mind, one that links
the working day and the everyday. Although we may prefer to be comforted by the view that violence is the unfortunate result of individual pathology, we must remember the phrase *going postal* originated in the objective conditions of the working day in U.S. postal facilities and should tell us something about those conditions: conditions of exploitation and domination; humiliating and alienating conditions that produce rage, bitterness, frustration, and indignation. (219)

Let me add that going postal in the U.S. postal service seems to have begun with the implementation of new post-Fordist techniques of controlling and disciplining labor and speeding up and making more profitable the production process, that are now widely applied, increasingly even to the academy (see Harvey, Fraser, Sennett, Head, and Ames). Further, Worsham’s study of going postal sadly but prophetically pointed at trends that more than a year after that essay was published we saw again in the tragic Columbine High School incident, a new “workplace” of domination, humiliation, and alienation.

Recent horrific events at Virginia Tech, as well as the predictable media reaction, only reconfirm the importance of this work pioneered by Worsham. Now that “going postal” violence has tragically come to campus, a site curiously exempt from the bloodiest examples of this violence till now (itself a significant fact), we *must* attend to the emotional world that our language constructs.

Worsham’s argument, then, critiques critical theory as well as other sorts of intellectual work, because in its intellectualization and exclusion of emotion, critical theory is undergirded by the same binaries. So Worsham’s argument is a critique of previous critical theory (and by implication, critical pedagogy) for its overemphasis on intellect and its inability to take emotion seriously. Worsham notes, “Critical pedagogy does not make emotion and affective life the crucial stakes in political struggle” (235). One of the aims of Worsham’s argument is to extend and mend critical theory precisely by accepting that emotion is a central category of critical theory. By exploring the ways in which emotion and emo-
tional labor has played a key role in the social construction of gender especially in the work of mothers and teachers, Worsham makes visible the seemingly endless, exhausting, and otherwise invisible labor of nurturance and emotional support. In one sense, going postal violence might be seen as a reaction to the withdrawal or the threatened withdrawal, of this all-encompassing and valuable social safety net. Emotional labor, then, is a subtle, powerful, and basic form of exploitation—labor that is produced by the worker, but that is owned by others and that contributes to the ongoing life of the institutions it is an invisible part of. Worsham argues,

Women are enlisted and exploited as nurturers in a society that does not recognize this labor as labor, as the most necessary labor if the social is to exist. Moreover, it does not confer on women and racialized others the status of full psychic, economic, social, or political subjects or agents. Dominant pedagogy requires that women seek recognition of themselves as subjects and agents through emotion-work and nurturing labor but in a system that withholds recognition of the necessity and value of this work. Maria Mies calls this situation "superexploitation". . . . It is a system calculated to ensure that women are the "appropriate" targets of further violence, real and symbolic. (239; emphasis added)

While Worsham primarily focuses in her essay on the effects of invisible emotional labor and its relation to gender, as she herself here indicates, something similar happens with race. And I think something like it occurs in terms of social class.

Worsham's "Going Postal: Pedagogical Violence and the Schooling of Emotion" is magisterial, groundbreaking in a number of ways. First, Worsham restores to critical theory and critical pedagogy perhaps the key category for praxis—emotional labor. Worsham's placing of emotion at the center of the production and reproduction system complicates but also concretizes liberation rhetorics. Without due consideration of what she calls the sex/affective productive system of corporate capitalism, a simple minded critique of codes will not reach many of our students or a
broader public. Worsham's categories of emotion and emotional labor are crucial not only to mapping (and critiquing) the dominant discourses, but they are crucial to collaboratively constructing with students the classroom and the curriculum. Students and teachers begin with experience—with emotion and values—but then theorize it. One of the effects of this approach is to show that much of what we all take to be experience is always already couched in theoretical categories not of our individual or collective choosing.

This is why Worsham's argument carefully stresses throughout that emotion (and emotional labor) is both individual and social. The individual experiences emotion as emotion, but that emotion does not simply fall to earth from the moon. As anthropology has long suggested, emotions are shaped and culturally constructed, as are individual experiences or performances. Almost all theory gets into trouble when it severs the individual from the social. In English studies and rhetoric and composition, it is precisely the site where the individual and the social intersect that is of most interest.

Although she focuses most on gender effects of emotional labor and draws a good deal on feminist theory, Worsham is making a larger claim, as she herself makes clear. Emotion is ever present. It is an important part of how we construct race. Victor Villanueva many years ago noted this curious phenomenon:

The post-ending of *Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color*, after the bibliography: "Victor Villanueva... describes himself as a 'husband, a parent, a professor, and as a happy man'". . . . The editor of *Bootstraps* required the bio because the book ended on such a down note. A down note. As I saw it (and intended it) the ending was a declaration of a sense of worth in what I do, in feeling quite blessed in having a career and life filled with meaning. . . . A co-worker reads my essay in *English Journal*, an essay ostensibly on Richard Rodriguez. She says, "You're so gregarious in person; I can't believe how angry your essay is". . . . A Chicana graduate student writes, wanting to know why her teachers condemn her writing for being too angry. She says she's critical, of course, but she doesn't hear or intend anger in her writing. Why this perception of anger? (159–60)
But I would add, emotion is also central to the construction of social class. Worsham's argument about emotional labor helps us to see that the anger that Villanueva problematizes is what in some sense is expected in the perceived absence of emotional nurturance and support. A certain discourse of social class will make certain constellations of emotion more or less appropriate, more or less expected, more or less visible. The fact that working class studies has primarily dealt with working class heritage and the emotion of pride versus shame strongly suggests that social class is emotional work. As Julie Lindquist shows, if nothing else, social class seems to elicit strong emotion even among academics ("Class").

In a far more precise way than do the terms of cultural or symbolic capital, emotional labor links gender to social class. Labor here is the mediating concept. This is not to say that gender—and identity in general—is only labor, but labor/emotional labor is certainly an important part of gender roles. For all of the work that has been done on identity and even on the way identity is produced, resisted, transformed, or performed, very little of that work starts from the concept of the labor done all the time, in the workplace, at home, in the schools, but also in our own time, in constructing our identity.

Finally, and most relevant to this essay, emotion/emotional labor links academic discourse to social class. Academic discourse does many things, but one of its most important, least noted, effects is its construction of the appropriate/inappropriate emotion in dealing with topics and with the world. The labor of academic discourse includes certain attitudes, values, and feelings; that is, it includes certain kinds of emotional labor and like any discourse, it excludes many other types of emotions. This is one of the most difficult, yet unspoken barriers of academic discourse for the student from the working class; the discourse comes packaged with certain expectations for emotional labor that are in conflict with the most hallowed parts of identity and affiliation. The seemingly simple imperative—just talk and write like this language in college—as Villanueva's comments show—is complicated by emo-
tion. Academic discourse asks us to take up specific language which entails specific emotions and values.

So I see a linkage between Worsham's work on emotion and Foucault's concept of discourse as applied to social class. If we see social class as discourse(s), then we also need to see as part of that discourse, the emotions it makes possible or makes unlikely. Each relatively independent discourse of social class will bring along with it certain likely or unlikely ways of feeling about the world, certain kinds of rewarded or punished emotional labor, certain values. Emotion is part and parcel of values. Conflicts between discourses are often first observed as conflicts in emotions and values. In the next section then, I map out the major discourses of social class, and in the last section I attend more closely to the conflict in values that discourse creates for those of us who study and teach writing.

Mapping the Landscape of Social Class as Discourse(s)

Having seen how emotion is an intricate and central part of discourse, including the discourses of social class, we can move this argument forward by mapping out in broad strokes the primary discourses of social class in which we are positioned. We might think of the work that the discourses of social class do as clearing a space behind the discursive equivalent of levees in which a specific sort of knowledge is constructed and privileged, keeping out the wider and more threatening discursive and nondiscursive forces. Like a levee, a discourse regulates the flow of forces around it, in this case the flow and force of language practices and the knowledge—and especially one's affective connection to the world—that they create. Like the levee system with its numerous dams, pumping stations, sluices, and holding reservoirs, a discourse needs an extensive network of mechanisms to keep it in place and enable it to adapt and function. And like the levee system, there are breaches in a discourse, some catastrophic, when a turbulent "chaos" of significations (chaos, that is, from the
perspective of a privileged discourse, of course) from the wider culture flood the once cleared discursive site. There are many levees in a flood control system, as there are many discourses of social class in a culture as complex as ours. Though there are many class discourses, some are highly favored and naturalized in our culture while others are hard to see. There are frequent, inevitable conflicts between discourses; there are constant pressures on the ruling discourse; leaks spring up all the time. Repairs in the reigning discourse are ongoing all the time, not just after catastrophes like Katrina. In some respects it is easier to control the flood of waters in the Mississippi delta than it is to control a culture. But these conflicts can be useful to the one who maps discourse. Unlike a taxonomy in which contradictions and the failure of mutually exclusive categories is a problem, a tracing of a map can be sketchy at first and can be revised. As a theorist, I am interested in mapping not taxonomizing, describing for now the general contours of these discourses, to begin the task of tracking the discursive array, the shape of the discourse. I do not propose this as a taxonomy but as an early draft of a map.  

So when I talk about social class in this essay, I distinguish the following six differing discourses. Once one is in or astride any of these discourses, one's emotions, concepts, theories, lines of argument, keywords, values, and subject position, are constituted. One of the reasons it is so difficult to talk about social class in rhetoric and composition is that we often are simply referring to two very different things—two different discourses—when we say "social class."

Discourse 1: The Discourse of Position
Social class in this discourse is a position (or location) in a hierarchy determined by some external and often easily quantifiable factor like income, education, and occupation. The discourse of position is the ruling discourse of social class in America. It rules the media and most political discussions. It is extremely difficult to get Americans to think in any other way about social class than as position. One of the mechanisms driving and regulating this
discourse is the double-bind that income becomes one of the most important determinants of class, yet unlike other intimate personal knowledge including sexuality, disclosing one's income is taboo, nearly anti-American. So by the logic of this very discourse, we are all withholding the very information the discourse designates central to making class visible. It is not surprising then that in this discourse it is extremely difficult to make class distinctions. In this discourse, we all mostly turn out to be middle class. This is the default discourse; if people do not note early on what they signify by social class, this is the discourse they usually inhabit. Even the New York Times series of articles on social class did not go beyond this foundational definition of social class in terms of education, income, occupation, and wealth—the "cards one is dealt" (Correspondents 9, 14). And when we euphemistically talk about "first generation college" students, we too are in this discourse because we are saying that a prime distinction of social class is whether or not one's parents have a college education.

The emotional work this discourse does is to rationalize the status quo, to naturalize the social world, to make one feel it is inevitable, to make one feel either comfortable with it and calm about it, or hopeless about changing it. As often happens, emotional signification often produces its dialectic opposite, its binary, so one can see the work of constructing calming rationalization and inevitability as being interconnected to its opposite—rage, that is, going postal.

Almost all scholars of social class in America address this discourse because it is so powerful, even when they do not locate themselves in it. Michael Zweig for instance in his book The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret begins from a social relations discourse of class, but attempts to use the discourse of position to analyze the U.S. Department of Labor's exhaustive data on occupation stratification and to persuade people that they are mostly working class. From this analysis, he argues that sixty-two percent of Americans are in the working class (34).
Discourse 2: The Discourse of Social Relations

Social class in this discourse is about social relations, especially power relations, between groups of people. Traditionally, it has focused on what groups have or do not have power in the production process in the economy. The concept of class as a social relation as described by Ollman fits in this discourse. Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and even Abraham Lincoln, and many others, argue that profit is produced by the workers. But then how to explain the bulging middle? And is the upper class as monolithic as we have been led to believe?

C. William Domhoff takes one approach by defining and examining what he, after C. Wright Mills, calls the ruling class in America. Domhoff notes in his 1998 edition of Who Rules America? that one can fairly accurately track members of the upper classes by looking for three things that few of the rest of us share: (1) prep school background, (2) membership in social clubs like Bohemian Grove, and (3) listing in the social registry and participation in events like the debutante season (81–99). Further, Domhoff notes that the ruling class forms at the conjunction of the upper classes, the corporate community and policy formation organizations. This power elite can be traced by a network analysis of four indicators—(1) Who benefits? (2) Who governs? (3) Who wins? and (4) Who shines? (19–27). Domhoff in his 1983 edition relies on this discourse of power relations to define social class. He says,

On top of the gradually merging layers of blue-and white-collar workers who comprise the working class and make up 85–90 per cent of the population, there sits a very small social upper class which comprises at most 0.5 per cent of the population and has a very different lifestyle and source of income from the rest of us. Many Americans are not even aware of the existence of this upper class. They are used to thinking of the highly paid and visible doctors, architects, television actors, corporate managers, writers, and governmental officials and experts who stand between the working class and the upper class as the highest level of the social pecking order. . . . (3–4)
Also, Erik Olin Wright locates his argument in a social relations discourse, and he analyzes contradictory class positions, showing how the managerial classes are no less connected to the primary social relations.

The discourse of social relations sees the world in us/them terms, pitting the numerous “little people”—including what we often think of as middle class people—against the few rulers. It is the discourse that emphasizes the feeling of solidarity, of what people have in common, and therefore is most useful in organizing them. It is a very rhetorical discourse in that it allows the rhetor to identify with most, if not all, of an audience, and to draw on common values to argue for action. The discourse of social relations is also, however, the discourse that radicals use often to “clarify” what they often term “real, material relations.” Yet, we must always keep in mind that such real, material relations are in an important sense produced by the discourse and in that production, disallow a multitude of other conceptions of class, agency, and identity. The emotional system the discourse sets up contrasts solidarity with little people with alienation from the larger social system. And consequently, the dangers of this discourse are that it emotionally alienates those not constituted—or who do not constitute themselves—as the numerous little people. In a culture where the discourse of position rules, many middle class people find more of their values with the rulers than with the ruled. I will have more to say about this under discourse of affiliation.

Discourse 3: The Discourse of Work and the Workplace

Talking with colleagues and students about social class often invites strong, sometimes out-of-proportion emotional reactions. But there are also ways to not provoke so many of these emotional reactions that in itself suggests the systemic nature of talk and writing about social class. If one wants to talk with someone who is reluctant to talk about social class or who gets very emotional about discussing social class, changing the subject to work and the workplace often provides a way into social class. We are living through a great transformation of capitalism that began about 1971
and is still ongoing called flexible accumulation or a post-Fordist regimes of capitalism (Berlin, Harvey, Ohmann, Ames). People have lived this transformation at the workplace. Almost everyone has a horror story to share about the new workplace, even in the so-called professions (see Jill Fraser on corporate workers and Simon Head on medical doctors). Even mainstream political discussions have acknowledged the importance of talking about the outsourcing of American jobs overseas. In a more positive vein, Mike Rose’s *The Mind at Work* focuses on the intellectual achievements that work now demands and that too often go unnoticed.

The *discourse of work and the workplace* focuses on social interaction and social stratification at work. It focuses on the changes in everything from technology to character (Sennett) that are occurring at work. And these changes are part and parcel of social class. The Joseph Harris—James Sledd—Marc Bousquet debate within our own profession is one good example of this discourse. Downing, Hurlbert, and Mathieu’s recent volume *Beyond English Inc.: Curricular Reform in a Global Economy* is another. Eileen Schell’s *Gypsy Academics and Mother Teachers* is another one.

Rhetoric and composition is classed not simply in its appropriation of post-Fordist methods, among them the hiring of contingent labor. It is classed in its teaching, its scholarship, and its professional practice. Rhetoric and composition is classed in its emotions, values, assumptions, presumptions, and, most of all, in what it prohibits or excludes. John Alberti begins with what is usually a taboo claim within our profession: how the facts of our employment (how many classes we teach, how many students we have each term, how our university and our students are class-marked) have major effects on what and how we teach. Such facts are part of the social structure in rhetoric and composition.

The discourse of work is one of the discourses of social class in the United States, one of the discourses that, to a point, is acceptable. To be in the social relations discourse is supposedly to be divisive, but to be located within the discourse of work simply acknowledges the reality of the most workaholic nation on earth.
That the bastion of capitalism in the twenty-first century also harbors an obsessive work ethic matched with an equally manic consumption ethic is not an accident. And as Ames and Worsham have shown, the emotions of rage and alienation that are seen in incidents of going postal are the other side of what Simon Head calls the new ruthless workplace.

The network of emotions that this discourse brings along are varied. Dissatisfaction with a particular job seems to be more acceptable than dissatisfaction with the social class system as a whole, since the American culture accepts the possibility that one might change the workplace or at least move on from it to a new job. Looking out for yourself at work also seems more understandable and acceptable than looking out for one's social class. There is some acknowledgement that work can be terribly unfair and that the individual to a point can and should resist this. Yet, without a larger concept of class (and of unions), such emotions tend to get translated into either personal pride in a narrative of upward mobility and individual accomplishment or despair about accomplishing more than making ends meet—if that.

Discourse 4: The Discourse of Cultural Heritage
In this discourse, social class is the cultural heritage, the way of life—what we think, say, do—that is created, preserved, treasured, celebrated, and passed down by folk in a class. It is a discourse of value and of everyday life. The cultural heritage discourse is the discourse that folk from the working class know well and exercise some control over, so it should not be surprising to see so many academics from the working class turning to this discourse. It makes a kind of sense to both researcher and to researched. Julie Lindquist's important book A Place to Stand: Politics and Persuasion in a Working Class Bar and Robert Bruno's Steelworker Alley: How Class Works in Youngstown are just two rigorous, respectful, and imaginative examples of the importance of cultural heritage discourse of class in academic work. Of course, Coming to Class: Pedagogy and the Social Class of Teachers (Shepard et al.) and This Fine Place So Far From Home (Barney and Law) are by
now classics of this discourse and its genre. Though these two books are classics of the discourse of cultural heritage, they also draw heavily on the discourse of witness, more about which soon.  

Most of working class studies is currently engaged with this discourse. One might say that working class studies is largely being produced by this discourse of cultural heritage. Among the people very interested in class as cultural heritage are creative writers. There has been a virtual renaissance over the last decade or so of creative writers from the working class publishing poems, stories, novels, creative nonfiction on this heritage. Jim Daniels has certainly been a leader in this. Following exemplars like Tillie Olsen in her book *Silences*, new presses including Bottom Dog Press, created by author and editor Larry Smith, have emerged. Bottom Dog Press has printed a variety of volumes of working class literature, including *Getting By: Stories of Working Lives* (Shevin and Smith). Kent State University Press, located in the rust belt of northeast Ohio not far from Youngstown, Warren, Akron, and Cleveland, publishes working class cultural heritage materials, including the photography of James Jeffrey Higgins in *Images of the Rust Belt*. And the Center for Working Class Studies at Youngstown State, the first institute of its kind in the U.S. devoted to working class studies, has an important function of preserving what is becoming a vanishing way of life in the Mahoning and Shenango valleys and beyond.

The discourse of cultural heritage sometimes has tricky relations to race when other cultures are seen as antagonistic to the home culture. Too often class cultural heritage has been defined in terms of white class heritage. Kefalas’s *Working Class Heroes* among many other important topics takes up racism in a white working class in a Chicago neighborhood. What on first examination seems to be a tidy and neat white working class neighborhood on closer inspection reveals a worldview that creates such neatness as a symbol of opposition to what is seen as the disorder of race. Such an objectification of race as culture in opposition to their culture makes it impossible for the neighborhood to see the rising
gang influence among their own children. The complex emotions signified by pride, especially pride in one’s culture, have a complicated history in America with race.

So the discourse of cultural heritage tends to have two related but opposite effects. Drawing on implicit knowledge, it allows people from a working class tradition to speak with confidence and savvy about social class as they have experienced it; it also tends to silence people from the middle or upper (or lower) classes who find it difficult to take up a position within it, and who often feel their experience is excluded, if not, in fact, devalued. Because this discourse strongly energizes emotional systems of pride and shame, it sometimes produces certain ambivalent, sometimes paralyzing, emotional states like the “imposter syndrome” described by Nancy Mack. Paralleling the imposter syndrome is the similar emotional state of class forgetfulness or class amnesia, in which one feels guilty or at least conflicted, not about exercising one’s authority as an academic, but about losing connections to the old class, to the old neighborhood, to one’s family. This brings us to the discourse of individual affiliation.

*Discourse 5: The Discourse of Individual Affiliation*

One of the difficulties in previous class theory has been dealing with individuals or groups who deny the class designation assigned to them. In my analysis, I wanted to leave room for this pervasive American opposition and ambivalence to social class. I think this is an important enough phenomenon in American culture to warrant its own discourse, *the discourse of individual affiliation*, which includes the ability to dis-identify and re-identify as an individual with a class. Julie Lindquist connecting this discourse with emotion describes this phenomenon this way:

There is something about the act of claiming working-class experience that pisses people off. It seems especially to bother other people who wish to claim working-class experience. . . . In one case, a well-known rhetoric scholar demanded from a panelist discussing strategies for teaching working-class students how she knew that her students were
working class. The questioner added that her own sister was working-class but would be mortified if anyone presumed her identity as such. ("Class" 187)

To the person who says, despite the evidence provided by values that emerge from the discourses of position, power relations, and cultural heritage, I am not from the working class (or the middle class or the upper class), I say fine. In this discourse, one has the feeling that one can choose to identify (or dis-identify) with whatever class one wants. Imagination is crucial here, as is the feeling of freedom. Imagining a new class position and identity is an essential part of American culture, and as such is an important factor in shaping the odds of whether a student from the working class can succeed at college. Yet, to accept the discourse of individual affiliation is not to posit any individual above or outside of discourse and class. It is simply to describe a culturally inscribed language practice that constitutes the individual by enabling certain subject positions and disallowing others. In fact, the discourse of individual affiliation fits well with the ruling discourse of position. Further, the discourse of individual affiliation puts into motion similar emotional configurations as the cultural heritage discourse; emotions such as pride or shame, ambivalence or bravado, satisfaction or critique, are privileged and circulated.

*Discourse 6: The Discourse of Witness*

The final discourse of social class I want to talk about here is quite difficult to see, to analyze, and to study. It is far from evident. That is the point—to point to the exclusions that class discourses otherwise make invisible by making them seem natural. The *discourse of witness* is unlike the other discourses in that it is not so much about persuasion. The other discourses are very rhetorical in that effects are created on those located within the discourse. If the discourse of affiliation is about persuading others and self about one’s class identity, the discourse of witness simply wants to make social class visible. The aim of the discourse of witness, then, is not to persuade or to inform or to change someone, even one’s self. Its effects on others are either subtle or nonexistent. The
discourse of witness is a speech act performative writ large—a witness is created by witnessing, nothing more. I speak and in speaking make social class for a moment visible. This discourse says something like "I witness to the working class." Now, someone else may well shape that witness for persuasive purposes, either deny it or affirm it or affiliate with it or disaffiliate with it, but the witnessing itself is not done primarily or at all to change someone's mind. Witnessing sometimes is done for or to a higher power, what Mikhail Bakhtin called the hero of discourse—to God or Science or History. But I am not convinced that this discourse of witness is always done for some higher power. I am obviously drawing on religious and legal analogies here, but both of them break down fairly quickly. The discourse of social class that witnesses says something like, "I am here. We are here. We exist whether you like that or not, whether you acknowledge us or not, whether you even hear us or not. We are here especially if you silence us and make us invisible."

Surprised by the large number of gay and lesbian contributors to their book on social class, Dews and Law in This Fine Place So Far From Home theorize a resemblance between the class narratives in their book and coming out stories in the gay community:

While our gender and race identities, comparatively stable and usually marked by readily visible signs, always send messages whether we intend them or not, our class identity is a good deal less stable and marked by signs more easily concealed. In order to claim working class identity in a context that presumes middle class homogeneity, we must do something. I, like the authors, . . . had to choose to disclose myself, a politically charged gesture for which the university has few opportunities; it in fact actively discourages such disclosure. (6)

There is something like that, something like a social class coming out story, that runs all through this discourse. The discourse of witness breaks the class silence. It makes social class visible. In doing that, this discourse is most at odds with the other discourses that naturalize class, making it less visible if not invisible. To an
extent, it may be better to think of this phenomenon as a break in discourses except that there are established traditions of language practices of witnessing. It is a regulated language practice that has the effect of revealing the other discourses and the ways they naturalize the social world. So, too, there is some hard to describe emotional satisfaction that is produced by this discourse, but again it is not as simple as individual or social expression. Rather the emotions that come along with this discourse seem to have more to do with the sense that there is an outside to discourse, that there are large spaces not yet regulated by discourse. In this sense, the witness discourse of social class is utopian.

How We Feel about Social Class:
Paul Fussell’s Contribution to a “Touchy Subject”

In *Class: A Guide Through the American Status System*, Paul Fussell makes some interesting comments on social class that surprisingly provide some independent confirmation of the map I have just drawn of social class as discourse. Fussell’s book is in many ways offensive in its portrayal of working class people, and it certainly is not theoretical, but in his attempt to be humorous, Fussell notes in his first chapter, titled “A Touchy Subject,” three very significant points. He observes that social class is revealed both by one’s attitude toward it (is it important? how important? unimportant?) and by how one’s group (I would say discourse) defines social class. Fussell makes the observation, then, that one’s emotion toward social class is classed. Fussell says,

Actually you reveal a great deal about your social class by the amount of annoyance or fury you feel when the subject is brought up. A tendency to get very anxious suggests that you are middle-class and nervous about slipping down a rung or two. On the other hand, upper-class people love the topic to come up: the more attention paid to the matter the better off they seem to be. Proletarians generally don’t mind discussions of the subject because they know they can do little to alter their class identity. (16)
While the observation may seem accurate enough in American culture, I would draw the reader's attention to the way the discourse works here in this passage in constructing Fussell's description of what he calls the "prole's" reaction to class discussion in contrast to what is left unsaid about the upper and middle class folks. The language that Fussell uses here strongly suggests that upper and middle class people, in contrast to Fussell's "proles," are able to alter their class identity. Fussell's description then is classed.

Fussell by arguing that emotion toward social class is classed, also argues that what one sees as essential to social class is classed:

If you reveal your class by your outrage at the very topic, you reveal it also by the way you define the thing that is outraging you. At the bottom, people tend to believe that class is defined by the amount of money you have. In the middle, people grant that money has something to do with it, but think education and the kind of work you do almost equally important. Nearer the top, people perceive that taste, values, ideas, style, and behavior are indispensable criteria of class, regardless of money or occupation or education. (16)

Finally, Fussell acknowledges the invisibility of social class in American culture. He says that in fact "Being told that there are no social classes in the place where the interviewee lives is an old experience for sociologists." Fussell quotes one such researcher: "'We don't have classes in our town' almost invariably is the first remark recorded by the investigator,' reports Leonard Reissman author of Class in American Life (1959). Reissman (in Fussell) continues, "Once that has been uttered and is out of the way, the class divisions in the town can be recorded with what seems to be an amazing degree of agreement among the good citizens of the community" (17).

I have found few examples that are more persuasive than this, that social class is discourse that speaks and in speaking creates its object. I too also have had direct experience with this in talking with my students (and colleagues) about social class. Aside from mostly agreeing there are no classes in their hometowns and, if
there are, they are all middle class, a large number of my students strongly believe that if class exists, it is all only really about money (income). I have had students in fact go down the list and make the fairly complex argument in a public discussion that all the other factors that one might argue are classed, all come about ultimately because of money (or lack of it). Perhaps Fussell's observation located in a theorized concept of discourse can help us to begin to view the feelings we in the profession as well as our students in our classrooms have toward social class. What we value and how we value are in part connected to social class. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the clash of differing values when we ask students to take up academic discourse and few places in the university are more diverse with respect to social class than first-year composition.

Social Class, Values, and Academe

The discourse of social class shapes and channels values. Values are the most visible part of the system of emotion that is put into motion and regulated by discourse. Conflicts among values are often good indicators of a configuration of less visible, conflicting emotions connected to the push-and-pull forces of the social class discourses. In a flood management system of levees, constant observations need to be made and regular measurements need to be taken to indicate and to anticipate the changing stresses and strains put on the system. Likewise values register the stresses and strains inside and outside of a discourse. Behind any value, is a discourse. One important contribution of discourse theory is that it makes visible differing values and argues that if values are conflicted, a wider set of discursive forces are at work.

In this final section, then, I want to take a bit more pragmatic look at the conflict between discourses by examining the conflict of values often encountered by students from the working class—and their teachers—in the university setting. The university is not so much a middle class enterprise, but a class enterprise where
discourses and values are in flux and in conflict. These conflicts between social class discourses are sometimes difficult to see in the academy. What we do and say and value seems natural, normal, given—just the ways things are. Yet, when we locate value(s) in discourse, we recognize the ways that specific sorts of language use do this often invisible work of forwarding some values while excluding many others. Such an approach makes clear that there is no such thing as simply teaching writing, because writing—and language in the form of discourse—always carries with it a context of use, those power relations that privilege (or marginalize) values.

Teachers of basic writing and first-year writing encounter this conflict of discourses as a conflict of values in the classroom. The assumptions that we teachers grew up with concerning college, college students, learning, and teaching, no longer hold. The university has changed and is changing; there is an increasing clash of discourses and values unimaginable even a decade ago (see Vandenberg et al.). Even those who are the first generation of family to go to college find that working class culture has also radically changed. Carolyn Boiarsky describes these conflicts in values well:

We would gather late Tuesday nights in Julie’s office after teaching our classes, our adrenaline still running high, and I would listen as Judith and Julie talked about their development courses, their frustrations and small victories. . . I listened as they described their students’ attitudes—not wanting to spend the time to reread a section of a book or to go through the revision process for a paper, not thinking of reading a good book or a poem as a pleasurable activity, never perceiving themselves acquiring knowledge to make knowledge, or recognizing school as anything more than a way to get a job. I recognized the same lack of skills, the same attitudes in many of my technical writing students. (ix)

This description strikes home for anyone who has taught first generation college students in first-year writing more than occa-
sionally. Later in the first chapter of *Academic Literacy in the English Classroom*, the writers describe in more detail these values. Boiarsky and the book's other authors expand on the influence of family, the authoritarian environment, and the specific view of the relation between work and school that students from the working class often bring with them to the academy (13–16). Families are often supportive of students getting an education in the abstract as a way of getting a better job (not a career), but tend not to provide the material or emotional support that first generation students need (13–14). The family rarely understands or wants to understand the academic environment. Homes do not have books or other reading materials, let alone computers and access. As others have noted, it is often even difficult to find space in a working class home where one can be alone to do homework or even to reflect. A running story shared among academics from the working class in the field is about how someone had to use the bathroom to study because it was the only space in their working class home where they would be, relatively, uninterrupted. Boiarsky and the other authors go on to note that families of these first generation college students are often run in an authoritarian, patriarchal way, and they use the distinction between positional-oriented family structure and person-oriented family structure that Irvin Peckham popularized that comes from the work of Basil Bernstein (15). They also quote Finn, who says of the students, “They expect people in authority to be authoritarian” (15). They conclude by speculating that the student from the working class may see the academy in a purely functional manner. It is at best a place where you can get some basic skills to get a better job, and at worst a place set apart from “the real world,” a “kind of intellectual playground where people ‘play around’ for a few years before getting down to the ‘real’ business of life”(16). One can see how the frequent assertion of some postmodern theorists that language and literature is all a game would simply reinforce this debilitating attitude that the university is not really a serious place. It also suggests why opening an analysis of the academy and its language(s) in terms of *work* tends to get a better response from such students.
Lest we think that the discourse of social class only produces positive values for the middle class person in the "elaborated code" and only negative values for the working class person in the "restricted code," we need to add the work of Larry Smith, who on his website describes positive "Working Class Values." Smith notes five general values of working class culture, placing these values into a more holistic context:

Communication: To the Point
Direct (even blunt), sometimes impassioned, accepts arguing. Functional (not reflective). Storytelling—Passing on values, history. Speak the truth (yet keep it in the family). Humor—Laugh to survive—getting down to it.

Family: Blood Ties
Support each other. Stay close to home. Parental rule—often patriarchy. Persistence and ingenuity: Make do—Getting by—sacrifice.

Community: Neighborhood
Mutual respect and cooperation. Democratic and egalitarian. Treat others fairly, especially the "little guy." Often denial and anger. Difficulty in seeing multiple perspectives.

Work Ethic: Work as Fabric of Life
Providing for family. Hard work and follow through. Respect for tools and maintenance. Having a good job. Functional and practical—getting things done. Time is money. Work sets the schedule.

Education: Get One
Value basic education—as a means of achieving "a good life." As a means of achieving "freedom of choice." But not too much education—"Don't forget where you came from."

Smith's list of values I think complicates and concretizes this discussion. What concerns us is not so much the values inherent in a text or even in the students from the working class as a group or values in those cultures. What I am suggesting here is that we locate these values in the discourse(s) of social class and that we
focus on the interactions between conflicting values in the dis-
courses in the academy. The discourses found at the university are
many and diverse, but surely the social class discourses—of, say,
both academic discourse and of the discourses brought by stu-
dents from the working class—are important in tracing and con-
structing, shaping, channeling values. In other words, what are the
conflicts in the values (and system of values) created by discourse
in a course like first-year writing or basic writing?

Let me locate four discursive sites where values are conflicted
in first year or basic writing.

Discursive Site 1: Work.
Boiarsky et al. are absolutely right in arguing that the first genera-
tion college student tends to bring notions of work to the university
that are in conflict with the middle class professionalism and its
attendant idea of career. But the tension in this value goes deeper,
as even they note. If one is in the factory or in a service industry
job—what we have now instead of factory jobs—work is not about
pleasure or exercising creativity, but about showing up on time and
putting in your time, following orders. We need to remind ourselves
that many jobs punish workers who exercise critical thinking.
Boiarsky et al. note how this directly impacts the English professor
who either believes or is told that he or she cannot grade on
showing up (good attendance) and time put in ("effort" and "im-
provement") (16):

Students immersed in working class discourses, in discovering
that time put in or effort or improvement don't "count"—or count
little—in academic discourse, may experiment with simply not
showing up for class at all or minimally, usually with disastrous
results. Students who come from a middle class environment
steeped in discourses that while not academic share values with
academic discourse know that just showing up alone won't get
them the higher grade, but they also know that the opposite (you
never need to show up) is most assuredly not true. They have seen
enough of parents working on their "own" time at home to realize
that what is key is results, regardless of the amount of time put in.
Students from college-educated families, or at least families that have experience with college and the professions, know well that they may have to put in more time outside of class to accomplish these tasks. They also know the value of consultation and tend to show up at conferences with teachers more often and even ask for help. Work for students from the working class is not the place to ask for help. That's cheating, or at least it is a show of weakness and inadequacy. For middle class students, it is the start of a lifetime of social networking in which more work gets done outside of the time spent "on the job" than on the job.

Further, the discourse of class creates an egalitarianism among working class folks that puts into question the expertise, but also the very activity of the professional and especially the very idea of "intellectual work." Intellectual work for many working class people is an oxymoron. Work is physical. How can there be real nonphysical work? Street smarts are acceptable and desirable, but intellectual work is paper pushing (or used to be before computers). With some exceptions—the scholar is hero in some cultures—students from the working class tend to find in that discourse the values of skepticism toward the enterprise of the university and intellectual work even before they begin.

But students from the working class are not simply ignoring the new environment and not adjusting out of inexperience or stubbornness or family or ethnic loyalty. They bring with them mechanisms—discursive mechanisms—to control and regulate "work," to modulate it. They make the rigid division between work and nonwork in part because that is the only way to exercise some control over it. Ralph Ellison quite eloquently captured this key function of language, that "in a world of insecurity and status preoccupations, '[o]ne uses the language which helps to make one at peace with the world, and which screens out the greatest amount of chaos" (qtd. in Dixon 18–19). We all have a need for language to stabilize our world and to protect us from assault.

One of the unspoken ways folks from the middle class regulate this flow of work into every part of their personal lives and set up boundaries is that they sometimes hire people to help them do
chores—everything from dry cleaners to housekeepers to tax consultants to typists to research assistants. To even say this is taboo. It is unsaid and invisible in the discourse; but it is not a value in a working class discourse. This is because, aside from the issue of having the money to do this, there is a great deal of emotional resistance to the very idea even when it presents itself. And finally, even if out of desperation to survive, a person in a working class discourse does hire help, there may be a peculiar sense of invasion of privacy that others do not experience—and which of course, reinforces, once again, the rigid binary between professional and personal life.

But regulating work is a great deal more than simply hiring people to do jobs for you. There are a multitude of support mechanisms for students from the middle class whose families have experience with academe. Knowing that money is available from a relative if need be, should a crisis arise, is an option usually unknown in working class discourse. In the best of times, the working class family is on the edge of financial chaos. Individuals going to college are often on their own, simply because the family cannot put everyone else in financial jeopardy for the sake of one individual. Of course, the huge increases in state school tuitions over the last decade or so have made this worse (Schmidt).

For the student who has inhabited a middle class discursive world, there also has probably been some previous experience with personal autonomy, time management, and self discipline in the realm of work and even academics. Students from middle class environments are more likely to be in the discourse of work that opens up that space for success. The whole notion of work, then, is a discursive construct and one that will help or hinder the student in college.

Discursive Site 2: Authority
There is a tension in working class value between the pull of authority and the belief in equality. Authority is strong when, as Ellison shows, the world outside threatens. What I see in the tendency of some students from the working class to desire
authority—and then resist it to the death—is the desire for stability in a life too often (and increasingly) being lived on the edge of chaos. The boundaries of their lives are threatened, and they respond by making the boundaries even more rigid. This is I think an understandable if regrettable response. In a more harmonious and less threatening world, a situation where life isn’t being lived on the edge of chaos, a person might be able to open up boundaries. A discourse allows for flexibility and play in part because the threat of economic and cultural disaster is held in abeyance. That is what I see in students whose parents have gone to college—a comfort zone created not simply by experience with academia (knowing what office hours are and how to use them for example; being able to read what the teacher really means about deadlines for documents; reaching out beyond the courses and curriculum to the wider intellectual life of the campus) but created by a value, the value of being in the fitting situations, being flexible, going with the flow. If students from the working class had gone with the flow, they wouldn’t be in college in the first place.

Yet, the very discourse that supports the student from the working class emotionally and materially in the decision to choose to give a college education a shot, also privileges hard boundaries and rigidity that will, if the student does not recognize it, defeat him or her in a middle class arena like the professions. If I teach in a relatively “structured” way which has clear lines of authority, my students from the working class are most comfortable and can accomplish nearly any task I ask of them. With enough scaffolding and emotional labor from me, they are able to perform any academic tasks. Yet, I worry that the more scaffolding and the more emotional labor I provide, the less I am helping students given that they are becoming less independent, less able to be flexible, to read the specific situation rhetorically. It is all very well to argue that rhetoric—and writing—is context specific and irreducible to a formula. I agree with that, but then I am in a safe discourse where my world and identity is not being threatened by such a value. To apply that value to my first-year writing students is to guarantee failure. Yet, to provide increasing scaffolding and emo-
tional labor—nurturance—seems to guarantee failure once the students leave my course. What Worsham calls the “withdrawal of affection,” and what I see as including emotional labor and the daily micromanaging and searching for better scaffolding for each student, may well threaten student success either now or later. This conflict over the value of authority is exemplified in the tendency I have noticed that first generation students expect close supervision over their work, and they are disappointed when they don’t get what they see as a sufficient amount of that. In this sense, one might say they are “needy.” They want supervision as much for approval, as for help; they can read a lack of monitoring of their every process (in comparison with their experience in high school and in low paying jobs), as a lack of interest or commitment from the teacher. In contrast, the student immersed in middle class discourses expects, even demands, a lot of independence and thrives on it.

Discursive Site 3: Entitlement
Entitlement especially since the Reagan administration and its attempt to cut out so-called entitlements has been a negative word. Special groups get entitlements, and the rest of us have to make do without any special help. That is a discursive product, a value that is basically new after 1980 or so. Yet, it is a curious value since one does not see one’s own entitlements when one is in the discourse of social class. If one is the son of a wealthy and powerful politician, then being accepted to an Ivy League school as a “legacy” —a word itself alien to many of us— is just one of a multitude of options available, not in any way comparable to affirmative action admissions. A legacy in the dominant discourse is not an entitlement; it is simply an old debt being paid. But it simply does not exist for the person from the working class, either as a material reality (no one before them went to the school, and even if they did, it wouldn’t help) or an ideal reality (a person from the working class is not going to know the word or the network of power relations that allow the word to signify). If one is middle class at college, one does not see loans, fellowships, teaching assistant-
ships, at university as anything but a part of the naturalized landscape of academe, no different from bells chiming at noon on the quad, or funny costumes professors wear during commencement, or the hushed voices used in department hallways—strange perhaps, but just what one does in college. One simply "knows of" such matters. For the student from the working class, this network of support is also invisible but not because it is naturalized, but because it does not even appear. It is only for the person traversing class discourses that entitlements first appear, twinkling between visibility and invisibility.

Discursive Site 4: Imagination
The city I live in has two famous buildings designed by the postmodern architect Peter Eisenman. When a friend who is a university professor but who has stronger roots than I in the working class and I go by one of Eisenman's works, there inevitably follows a remark about the elitist architecture of the structure. This comment comes from a person who is in other realms of life incredibly "creative." When I try to argue that there is a logic and language in what is going on in these structures and in "modern" and "postmodern" art, there at times is silence. There seems to be a steadfast refusal to entertain the thought that there is an imaginative world involved here that is worth the trouble, worth entertaining, worth imagining in what seem quirky or weird moves in Eisenman's work. It is all brushed aside with the statement that it is elitist architecture for the well off, if not wealthy, the implication being that one does not have to worry oneself about it, let alone concern oneself about entering into the imaginative universe it entails. What at first appears to be a failure of imagination is better viewed as a differing discursive construct of imagination, one in which the values of imagination differ. I frequently see the same thing in many of first generation undergraduate college students who are perfectly able to understand an innovative work, but who are unwilling to do so. Imagination is discursively produced. The reason that imagination figures into any discourse is that no situation exactly recurs; all is in change, though change in differing
temporalities. Any playing off of conventions or breaking of conventions or transformation of conventions occurs in part because language use and language situation are always new. Imagination is a necessity, or a discourse does not survive; yet differing discourses construct and value imagination differently. A good many of the binaries that are created by the discourses of social class could, at least, be made visible and called to account, given imagination and the motive. But imagination also gets at the very heart of all we do and are.

It is a powerful imaginative act for first generation college students to come to college in the first place; it is largely an act of imagination that will determine whether they complete their degrees and enter their chosen professions. I am interested in the value of imagination as produced by and within class discourses. How do we use language to conceive of a different future? Of future uses of language? How do we use language to know new things and to create new knowledge within the constraints of a discourse? Outside of a discourse? When we who are first generation college students (and first generation Ph.D.’s) decided to leave working class culture and make the crossing to the university and the middle class culture of the professions, what sort of language acts helped us to imagine that action before it happened? As it was taking place? Foucault always claimed his work was about freedom, showing us how we had a good deal more freedom than we thought. If discourse were perfectly closed and if there were no imagination, we would never have conceived of, let alone sustained our crossing. Imagination, then, can reproduce a discourse, but it also illuminates breaks in it. Where are those discursive breaks within the class discourses of the working class and the class discourses at work in the university?

**Toward an Archaeology of Knowledge of Social Class?**

If we approach social class as discourse(s) using the concepts and archaeological approach pioneered by Foucault, certain logical
implications follow. Foucault’s work from this period is simply not relevant to an individualist approach to language and power. To the extent that social class has been studied in rhetoric and composition, it has been overdetermined by a pervasive individualism that is part and parcel of what might be called a will to service, the need to make all work in rhetoric and composition into some new gimmick to be applied either in the classroom, in the curriculum, or in administration. Foucault’s discourse and his broader archaeology do not offer any short term, easily applied strategies for service and to project such strategies onto his work and his concepts especially the concept of discourse does a violence to them. In fact, Foucault argues that there is a value in viewing the individual subject as a surface effect of discourse. As Paras notes,

The painful truth that needed to be embraced was that men were wholly interchangeable speakers of systems of thought that transcended them. Archaeology did not exist to exalt the voices of those who speak, but to demonstrate that every speaker is a ventriloquist’s dummy. (35)

Foucault argues that this does not mean a fatalistic quietism; it rather signifies a major complication of notions of agency and of action/ effects. He states, “I have not denied—far from it—the possibility of changing discourse. I have deprived the sovereignty of the subject of the exclusive and instantaneous right to it” (209). In a kind of Copernican move, Foucault inverts the usual relation between knowledge and power. It is not that knowledge constructed by a sovereign subject creates power, but that power creates knowledge, which creates the appropriate subject. He puts it this way:

In the proposed analysis, instead of referring back to the unifying function of a subject, the various enunciative modalities manifest his dispersion. To the various statuses, the various sites, the various positions that he can occupy or be given when making a discourse. To the discontinuity of the planes from which he speaks. And if these planes are linked by a system of relations, this system is not established by the
synthetic activity of a consciousness identical with itself, dumb and anterior to speech, but by the specificity of the discursive practice. (54–55)

Of course, such a view does not forbid people from writing and talking about the classroom or administration, but it clears a space, a disciplinary space, where this “will to service” is not required. Given the long-running inability of rhetoric and composition to see social class as central to its project, and given the nearly obsessive impulse in the discipline to turn scholarly work, especially theory, within even an article or essay, into some classroom practice, perhaps the most important implication of Foucault’s discourse is that it focuses on the social and systemic aspects of language practices without an immediate concern for service or subject. While rhetoric and composition has been influenced by the social turn since 1987 or so, the way we write and talk in the discipline, especially about social class, is still largely determined by an individualist, service orientation. This may be a contributing factor in our inability to come to class in more than a confessional or pragmatic mode. As we once again try to bring social class to the disciplinary agenda, perhaps the time has come to try a new approach that brackets the subject and service.

Foucault’s theory of discourse has several implications for those of us in rhetoric and composition. First, there are no immediate sure-fire classroom, curricular or administrative implications of the theory being proposed here. We cannot know what the effects of this or any theory are or will be, certainly not in the short run. While the previous section of this essay mapped out some conflicts of values, these are not meant to be action statements, imperatives to change service—teaching, curriculum, administration—as such.

Second, rhetoric and composition has misappropriated the concept of discourse (at least as Foucault uses it) almost from the start whenever it has spoken of the individual (usually the student but sometimes the teacher or others) either appropriating discourse or by act of will locating him or herself in discourse. Even contact zone theory locates an individual amid the flux and turbu-
lence of discursive landscape. Rather, we need to begin with the fact that the discourse constructs the subject. The social class discourses construct the subject. The geography of discourses is the map of the *conditions* for language practices.

Third, one of the sharpest criticisms of James Berlin’s call for a Birmingham-School-like cultural studies approach to English, is that Berlin seems to assume a link between individualist intellectual analysis, a critique of dominant discourses, and cultural change, in the form of the goal of persuading students to take on more liberatory views of the world, if not more liberatory politics. The argument seemed to be—or at least was taken up to be—that if teachers in English simply studied and asked students to study and critique dominant representations, change—of some sort, whether intellectual, individual, or cultural, or maybe all three—would occur. Such a naive view based on Enlightenment assumptions seems to dismiss the body and embodied knowledge and emotions and perhaps student agency. Whether this is an accurate representation of Berlin’s work is questionable, but regardless, what matters is what is omitted in such critiques. If English has changed its subject matter and method over the last thirty years, then the disciplinary discourse in some sense requires students and teachers to attend to such theory; one cannot ultimately avoid this work and be in the disciplinary discourses. There is no discipline outside these discourses. But, also, the discourse of witness, and Foucault’s far more profound archaeology, have as one key collective motive the disabbling of what is arguably discourse’s most important effect: its ability to naturalize the social world, to make it its social construction invisible. Given this, it is not so much that the teacher or student do anything that changes minds (and bodies)—whether decoding and finding binaries and dismantling ruling narratives—as it is that the collective work of archaeology occasionally turns the discourse temporarily off and *that* may have effects.

Fourth, this essay argues that “discourse” is the best way to keep rhetorical the conversation about social class in rhetoric and composition; that is, discourse brackets and excludes the primary
the discipline has talked and written about issues—one either teaches and studies language or one teaches and studies politics. This is a formalist construct and it is ultimately anti-rhetorical. Instead, we teach and study discourse, which views text and context, language and politics, as different sides of the same event. This is anti-formalist and rhetorical in the most profound sense.

Finally, Foucault's theory and the analysis of social class it enables in this essay suggests that rhetoric and composition is not primarily procedural knowledge—that is, knowledge about how to write or speak—but instead involves propositional knowledge, knowledge about information. Further, this view forwards knowledge as social attitudes and emotions. Rhetoric and composition has so emphasized how to knowledge that it is nearly impossible to think about what a writing course would be if it were not premised only on improving skills. Yet, inviting students to do the disciplinary work of mapping discourses may not have any connection to skill and the guarantees we make concerning their improvement. What would happen if rhetoric and composition disinvested and got out of the business of being skill providers from first-year writing all the way through—including professional writing?

**After the Storm:**
*Kairos and the Call for Work on Social Class*

As I write these words, a new hurricane season is about to begin. Within a few weeks, the television news and newspaper reports will begin to note storms forming near the west coast of tropical Africa and will track their approach, their magnitude, and the threat potential they pose to coastal America along the Gulf Coast and the southern Atlantic. The year after Katrina was a mild one as far as hurricanes that hit the U.S. were concerned. Most authorities have warned not to get used to such a mild season—that, in fact, it may well be the anomaly. The Army Corps of Engineers has repaired the New Orleans's levee system. New Orleans, on the other hand, is not back to its pre-Katrina self. Two weeks ago a large and well
publicized demonstration, covered by the national media and led by the mayor of New Orleans and Jesse Jackson among others, marched to underscore the point that after two years, New Orleans still has not received the federal help promised after Katrina. The federal government to which the citizens of New Orleans paid taxes their entire life, has not seen fit to organize efforts to send the help called for by the situation. Help has not arrived, at least not in the magnitude called for by the local needs. Tourist and upper class sections appear to bear some semblance to normal, but the poorer and working class neighborhoods are devastated still.

The state of Louisiana set up a commission after the storm and its recommendations are beginning to appear. One proposal is to divert the Mississippi River so that it will begin to restore the wetlands, bringing needed sediment to the estuaries, which are sinking and being covered by the salt water of the fastly encroaching Gulf. One reason Katrina's effects were so strong is that the wetlands and barrier islands have been under attack for a century. What to some people looks like swamp is actually a vital part of an ecosystem. Among many other benefits, the wetlands purify water, provide homes for varied species, and shield the coastal areas that are above sea level from approaching hurricanes. Of course, diverting the Mississippi may have detrimental effects on shipping and industry, on jobs and the economy. Although places like the Netherlands have been able to construct an ecologically vital flood control system and maintain one of the most prosperous economies in Europe, there may not be the political will to do the same in Louisiana or in Washington.

As I write these words, I am beginning a move that will take me from the Midwest to within sixty miles of the Gulf. When one relocates to hurricane alley, one begins to pay a good deal more attention to such stories. What I hope I have shown in this essay is that regardless of where we live we have all been part of a "discursive Katrina," which weakened and breached the discourses of social class in our culture but also in our discipline. Kairos is the ancient idea of "fitness." While it is a complex concept with many
important and subtle meanings, one way to understand kairos is to see it as a situation calling for a specific, appropriate response. The time is ripe; the stones cry out. The very environment almost seems to call us to speak and write. I believe the kairos of our post-Katrina world is a call for social justice—for New Orleans, but also for all of those caught up in the systemically produced inequalities of social class and even for the environment which has been subjugated by the same economic system. Social justice for New Orleans is part of this larger system of social class, and that system can best be approached in rhetoric and composition through discourse. The ruling discourse of social class while repaired is seriously impaired. To an extent, the discursive Katrina has merged with an evolving and increasing system of pressure in rhetoric and composition to address more fully social class, something mostly avoided for thirty years, creating an unusual, perhaps once-in-a-lifetime, “perfect storm.” This essay provides one suggestion for how we might take advantage of this situation to begin to study and open a conversation about social class.

University of Houston
Houston, Texas

Notes

1. See for instance Paul Krugman's column of September 2, 2005 titled “A Can't-Do Government.” Krugman says, “At a fundamental level, I'd argue our current leaders are just not serious about some of the essential functions of government. They like waging war, but they don't like providing security, rescuing those in need, or spending on preventive measures.” The idea that a conservative ideology is not interested in making social programs, entitlements, and aid, work, is part of the “starve the beast” rhetoric that would prefer to abolish these governmental functions and let the private sector deal with them. This has clearly been the goal of conservatives at least since Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal.

2. There are many good websites that cover what I am calling the breach of the prevailing discourse. The ones from a leftist point of view
include Russ Baker's "The Media Labor Day Revolutions." He argues, "The magnitude of the Hurricane Katrina disaster and the astonished—and astonishingly vigorous—response puts in perspective how hard it has generally become, in this country, to deliver the unadorned, unapologetic truth." Baker traces the conflicts between the ideological line of Fox News and the break their own stars—Shepard Smith and Geraldo Rivera—made with the official line on the air.

For a day-by-day Katrina timetable, see www.thinkprogress.org/katrina-timeline. Ishmael Reed has a powerful reaction to what he sees as racist coverage even from The New York Times. He gives a contemporary critique of the media coverage arguing that "On Thursday, neocon New York Times columnist David Brooks repeated some of the stereotypes listed by his colleagues and added some of his own. For instance, he believes that among the American population, only white middle class men are monogamous." But there are differences even on the left concerning how stereotype-free the media coverage was. Eric Alterman notes, "The New Orleans flood produced a dizzying array of images both striking and shocking, but what was perhaps most unusual about them was the return to American television screens and newspaper front pages of poor people in a manner that was neither condescending nor condemnatory." Alterman notes the break in the prevailing discourse this way: "It's impossible to tell why it was that so many TV news professionals, even the famous whores of cable news, caught the fever, unapologetically pointing to race and class as fundamental dimensions of the unfolding catastrophe." Alterman ascribes the change to professional shame. He describes an interaction between MSNBC anchor Lester Holt and Republican House leader Tom Delay who had said, "We are doing a wonderful job; we are an incredibly compassionate people." According to Alterman, "Holt refused to back off. 'Those people at the Superdome, those people at the convention center. They are largely black and they are poor, and they are largely left behind. What does that say about our country right now and how it treats its citizens.'"

Even websites not on the political left noted the change in the discourse and the popular support of the media in its change in coverage. On September 11, 2005, USA Today's Peter Johnson wrote, "Americans, usually critical of the media, have given the news coverage of Hurricane Katrina a thumbs up and major outlets are pledging to stay on the story to find out what went wrong with the response to the disaster" www.usatoday.com/life/columnist/mediamix/2005-09-11-medi­mix_x.htm He cites a Pew Research Center poll of one-thousand Americans on September 6 and 7 that found that sixty-five percent rated the coverage good or excellent.
3. See for example Perlstein's account of the historical rise of the conservative movement in the 1950s and 1960s. One of the key strategies of the movement was to reject—consciously and loudly—the consensus discourse of an activist government that was in place and approved of by the American people at least since 1932—that is, as Weaver notes, to accept that the struggle was in part a struggle over language. Perlstein says, "So it is appropriate that this story should begin with a little circle of political diehards whose every move was out of step with the times, who lived in the mental and social world presumed to be in its death throes ever since Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* had driven the stake through its heart in 1922, but who managed to set the spark that lit the fire that consumed an entire ideological universe, and made the opening years of the twenty-first century as surely a conservative epoch as the era between the New Deal and the Great Society was a liberal one" (xvi).

4. Fredric Jameson discusses cognitive mapping, especially when he is interpreting film in *The Geopolitical Aesthetic*, among other places. Adam Roberts presents a clear and accessible description of this mapping in his chapter "Jameson on Cinema" (135-45). However, the mapping I do in this essay is closer to the mapping of the discipline of rhetoric and composition proposed by Wiley, Gleason, and Phelps. "This map is intended to be heuristic—an exploratory tool rather than a definitive claim—that can serve as a provisional framework for reading with immediate, if partial, understanding.... It is this probing, critical, reflective process of mapping, not the categories of the map itself, that should enable users of this book to learn how to make their own sense of composition and rhetoric" (2). This is not a taxonomy, but rather a tracing of the shape of the discursive array that can and should be altered as further work is done on understanding the way social class as a regulated language act works in this culture and moment in history.

5. The work of Foucault suggests that perhaps we have enough—perhaps too much—research on the oppressed and perhaps it is time to, as Laura Nader argued, "study up" the power structure. "Discourse" as Foucault uses the term signifies the power language of a discipline, a society, an epoch. The more knowledge of the oppressed that exists, the better controlled they can be. This is one reason Foucault strategically chose the prevailing discourses as object of study.

6. Through this section, I will use "values" to signify discursive values, points in the affect system made possible by discourse, but also, dialectically and simultaneously, making discourse possible. I am not simply noting four themes coming from "experience," a problematic concept itself. Nor is value here being used in a psychological or sociological sense. Value in this essay is discursive. In this final section, I am trying to
make visible the conflicts in values at four sites. In some ways, my usage is similar to that of John Frow in *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value*. Frow says "I take the concept of value in the first instance as an effect of social organization" (4). And with Frow I view this insistence on the value of value to be positioned, rather than neutral or value-free (133–36).

7. Bloom’s “Freshman Composition as a Middle Class Enterprise” is a pioneering study of social class and academe. It is one of the most important articles on social class in the last thirty years in our profession because it connects values with social class, specifically in the work of first-year composition. All current work in the profession of rhetoric and composition on social class needs to acknowledge Bloom and the key contribution she has made in breaking the professional taboo against doing scholarship on social class and rhetoric and composition. Yet, in my view, it is in academic discourse, not simply in the fact of being in the first-year composition classroom, where the conflict of values is most attenuated. Most teachers in the classroom, we presume, are humane and helpful. But in academic discourse is embedded a set of values in conflict with those in working class discourses that even the most humane and helpful teacher cannot erase. While Bloom is correct in her important suggestion that how we teach is as, if not more, important than what we teach (what used to be called the hidden curriculum in education circles), how we teach I would argue is still a part of a discourse. It is hidden, invisible, precisely because it is discursive. That is an important part of what discourse does. I also would shy away from claiming that first-year composition or even the American university are middle class enterprises. Aside from the dangers of essentialism, I see things at the university as more complex than that, especially since the revolutionary shifts in student university enrollments that took place after World War II due to the GI Bill, and in the 1960s and 1970s due to heavy federal and state support of higher education (see Dixon). Perhaps the university could be said to be middle class a century ago when its graduates were middle and upper class.

And perhaps the majority of academics still come from the middle class though we do not know that for sure. But the university, which we must recall includes students and a wide range of workers as well as academicians, now seems less solidly middle class to me than even the professions, which to be sure, take up residence close to and sometimes within universities. At any rate, what seems crucial to me is not what an institution is in terms of social class markings, but rather what conflicts between class discourses take place within and beside the institution, one more reason why class studies seems more appropriate than working class studies.
8. Voloshinov pioneered this work by arguing that language is involved in just about every activity in life and that, therefore, it picks up and becomes a trace of those activities. He goes further, however, and indicates that it is precisely when language use flourishes and becomes dense and also becomes "hot" and "emotional"—that is, when keywords become hot buttons that seem to trigger arguments and conflicts, that we have a good track of underlying social conflicts in the making, particularly class conflicts. Language use, then, becomes the most sensitive indicator of changes afoot in society precisely because there is no language use outside of the network of power relations that support it. Lindquist's claim that social class seems to be an emotional topic in rhetoric and composition, from Voloshinov's view, is a sign that something crucial is being tracked in society (or in rhetoric and composition) that makes class a hot issue. It is, for one thing, a sign of discursive taboo, a breaking of the polite American's assumption that we are not supposed to raise the question of social class; but it is also a sign of the increasing divide between the top and bottom of the economic scale, as well as the stagnation of middle class incomes for the past decade or two. To even raise the issue of social class in composition and rhetoric would seem to threaten the unleashing of the deeper social conflicts held back and regulated by our current discourses.

Raymond Williams was among the first to notice Voloshinov's claim that connects emotion, language and society and put it to use in his books *Keywords* (22) and *Marxism and Literature* (35–42) during the mid-1970s. This turn from language to discourse was signaled in rhetoric and composition by the work of Patricia Bizzell ("College," "Cognition") and David Bartholomae ("Inventing") and others (Berlin, Brodkey, Faigley, Susan Miller). These theorists, while focusing on language acts (Bartholomae is particularly good at valuing and explicating student texts), introduced and extended to the discipline at large the key concept of academic discourse which Mina Shaughnessy in her *Errors and Expectations* (1977) had already posed as the goal of basic writing instruction (see 7–13; 240, 257–73; 305–06). What Bizzell, Bartholomae, and others did was begin to move the profession away from characterizing texts in terms of traits (e.g. abstract/concrete, structured/unstructured, correct/incorrect) or toward locating such traits in the psychology of the student, to viewing discourse as the generator of value traced by language. Although the difficulties with the concept of discourse community have become increasingly apparent with time, as Joseph Harris showed us in his early incisive critique (1989) and as Bizzell herself is the first to admit in her abandonment of discourse community theory for contact zone theory and alternative discourse theory ("Contact"), Foucault's discourse
theory itself provides a corrective for many of these weaknesses. In the tradition of Foucault, by starting from the discourse(s) of social class rather than from discourse community or contact zones let alone social class as economic or cultural construct, we retain the focus on language, but see such acts as part of a network of power relations that themselves can—even must—be entered.

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