In the summer of 1994, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, one of the most prestigious art museums in the Midwest, installed on its spacious front lawn three giant sculptures—three giant shuttlecocks—created by the pop-art sculptors Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen. One of the purposes of the shuttlecocks, according to van Bruggen, is to "bring out the museum in a different way" by lightening the ponderous columned building looming on top of a long green that slopes toward the main thoroughfare (qtd. in Thomas). From across Brush Creek, the shuttlecocks appear in the distance, lightly perched on the grass in front of the museum, which, as a result, has been whimsically refigured as a kind of badminton net. When it was revealed that these sculptures would be permanent additions to the museum's landscape, the news set off a firestorm of criticism in the Kansas City media, mostly decrying falling standards for art, among other things. And, yet, museum officials predicted that these sculptures would make the building more approachable, less forbidding, and hence more "open" to the community. As it turns out, the shuttlecocks are now a favorite photo prop, bringing in groups that had historically avoided the museum. Thus, according to the museum's curator of twentieth-century art, Deborah Emont Scott, they have done "more to open up this institution than anything we've ever done" (qtd. in Thorson). The shuttlecocks have aesthetically refigured space and materially altered the physical, social, and demographic character of that space.

While the media discourse about the shuttlecocks for the most part has been framed in terms of the discourse of art standards, the most significant effect of the shuttlecocks has been to alter public space. In this essay, we want to make a similar argument about the history and present state of English studies. Typically, the issue of reform in the humanities is represented as primarily involving standards of art or writing or culture, focusing on what should be taught in the humanities and how. What tends
to get lost in such debates about reform is the problem of public space and the role that humanities disciplines play in both figuring and materializing space in higher education and in larger communities. By “public space” we mean the multiple environments in which humanities disciplines attain their meaning and value, as well as the environments through which our students circulate before and after their encounters with us. Considered as a problem of public space, the issue is not only what the given humanities discipline (or a museum) should have in it, but also who is empowered to enter that space, on what terms, and where they can go from there. As Kurt Spellmeyer poses the problem, there is a world of difference between teaching the autobiography of Malcolm X in a classroom and reconstituting institutional space as a place where excluded groups—say, black nationalists such as Malcolm X—might feel legitimately present in ways comparable to more mainstream students (272-73).

Space, Geography, and Reform

Literature, long the dominant focus of English departments, historically has been defined in the discipline as a form of art. This view has changed somewhat over the last twenty-five years. The main thrust of recent critical theory has been to reposition literary studies as an inquiry into culture and to interrogate the ideological content of literary and other texts. The focus has largely remained on interpretation in American literary and cultural studies, but what is interpreted and the purposes of interpretation have decidedly shifted. New texts have been introduced into the canon of Anglo-American literature, and the purpose of interpretation has been largely historical: examining the relations of a text to its audiences and social contexts, and investigating its usefulness as a way of understanding the present. Texts are viewed as interventions in historical time, interventions that reflect and transform ideology. What has not been sufficiently considered, however, is how literary and cultural studies, in new and old guises, refigure and rematerialize space.

Usually, academics associate the work of designing institutional architectures (in both the literal and figurative senses of architecture) with administrators. Literally speaking, administrators control space through their decisions about capital improvements, allocation of building space, design of campus grounds, law enforcement practices on campus, and so forth. Figuratively speaking, administrators shape architecture—the social character of institutional space—by making decisions about, among other things, the demographics of student admission and retention, the
funding of academic programs and their viability in relation to changing labor markets, and how faculty work will be allocated and assessed. Certainly, faculty have thoughts about these things and discuss them, but these issues do not tend to be the focus of discourse about disciplinary change.

In *Working Space*, the painter Frank Stella traces the emergence of painting as a form of art independent from architecture. After 1500, Stella argues, “the artist became critical of his relationship to the surfaces of architecture and sought to modify it, . . . creating a painted space that interacted in some meaningful, though often competitive, way with the structure” (5-6). Stella credits Caravaggio with decisively establishing this new independence of painterly space from its formerly decorative relation with architecture and with winning greater autonomy for the artist by creating spaces not wholly dominated by the architectural forms and functions of the church and the state. In some ways, we would argue that college humanities professors have accomplished something similar since the late nineteenth century. We have achieved a fair degree of control over our concrete work—what and how we study and teach—at the expense of seeing ourselves as autonomous from the spaces in which we work. Thus, we have distanced ourselves from our functions within the architecture of our institutions. We have created our own “working space,” but we have failed to adequately consider how our work functions in and as an architecture that creates safe and dangerous spaces; interacts with local neighborhoods and communities; links geographical regions; distributes students to professional schools, employers, or elsewhere; and establishes a pattern of circulation through courses, requirements, and careers. How would we understand our work differently if we considered its effect not as a transportable painting independent of architecture, but as a mural in complicity or conflict with a local (and global) architectural design?

Obviously, considering our work in this way requires that we extend architectural theory beyond narrowly technical or aesthetic concerns with built environments, incorporating architecture into a broader theory of cultural production and practice. As Kenneth Burke has pointed out, any theory or nomenclature not only reflects but also selects and deflects reality, and the view of culture we are advocating focuses attention on how subjectivity and agency function within and across designed environments. In some ways, this framework for inquiry aligns us with one of the most significant projects of recent postmodern theory, which has been to shift the focus of our attempts to understand institutions from ideology to
space. Although by no means discarding the concept of ideology, theorists such as Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Fredric Jameson, Henri Lefebvre, and others have increasingly found its traditional range of meaning inadequate for understanding how contemporary institutions operate. For instance, one of the projects of Foucault’s later work is to show how institutions work in ways that supercede ideology, how power relations can “materially penetrate the body in depth, without depending even on the mediation of the subject’s own representations” (Power 186).

Spaces materialize functions and structures in excess of their discursive content. This thinking has been further enriched by the recent cross-pollination of critical theory with geography, architecture, and urban planning, fields that view identity as always interdependent with space and built environments. To understand English studies and the possibilities of reform in this context, we must consider how our work is shaped by what the architect Peter Eisenman calls the “occupiable forms” that our institutions make available to us, forms that are shaped by local university policies and regional geographies and community needs as well as by large global forces such as the development of capitalism on an international scale.

Because social spaces are interdependent, the meanings of our work in any one space often spill over into others. Indeed, the meanings and functions of our work in English studies are often an effect of the relationship between the many spaces in which our work and our students circulate. The extrinsic meanings of English—those that others assign to our work—often surface in the classroom, the department, and the professional meeting by a kind of ventriloquy that we often do our best to ignore. To cite an example, one of us teaches a writing class that is populated mostly by medical students who are in a six-year combined undergraduate and medical degree program. Recruited from the top of their high school classes, these students are typically well-prepared and, without much trouble, are able to produce polished and competent writing that has usually been well-received by their teachers. However, when the idea of easily reproducible and serviceable writing competence was challenged in one class meeting, such a challenge produced little discussion and an extraordinarily high level of tension and anxiety in the class. A week or so later, the hidden meanings of that tension broke to the surface as a student angrily complained that the teacher expected too much, that the first biochemistry exam was to be given during the same week the paper was due, and that the medical school faculty who will decide who continues in medical school and who will be tracked elsewhere
will not care nearly as much about this writing class as the student's knowledge of biochemistry. Some students were embarrassed at the crassness of this revelation. The professor contested the ideology behind the supposition that critical literacy is unimportant in the preparation of a doctor. Yet, critique notwithstanding, the functions of such a "truth" are not really open to question. About the values that have been geographically coded in this space, the student was largely correct.

Examining how the extrinsic meanings of our work have historically developed involves us in a geographical perspective. The term geography—literally "writing the earth"—traditionally carries a suggestion of a determinate set of physical constraints (proximity to rivers or oceans, climate, resources, social groups, and so forth) or social relations (interdependence or exchange with persons or groups who may be near or far). Certainly, our practices as faculty are not rigidly determined by such constraints, but geographical relationships do shape many dimensions of our work, perhaps more than we are willing to admit. For instance, grading is a practice obviously rooted in geographical relationships, making our work exchangeable with outsiders and facilitating the extraction of extrinsic meaning. Whether it factors into our thinking or not, universities are organized to enable different groups—employers, admissions committees, faculty, students, community organizations, and so on—to use academic knowledge in different ways. However, when confronted by students' preoccupation with grades, faculty too often dismiss such concerns as evidence of individual foibles—naive careerism or intellectual apathy—rather than analyzing how practices such as grading systematically mediate the effects of disciplinary work.

This estrangement of intention from effect is a basic feature of higher education as a designed environment. A surprisingly large range of academic activities—from grading, to nominating students or teachers for awards, to tenure and promotion decisions, to working as a referee for an academic journal—involves us in a process of estranged judgment whereby one party evaluates another party by reporting the results to a third, often anonymous party who renders an "external," and presumably more "objective," judgment (for a more detailed analysis of this evaluative pattern, see Watkins 83-85). Such processes involve us in contradictions. To cite an ordinary example from our own experience, in a course we teach on the role of literacy and schooling in reproducing class inequality, we often find ourselves in contradictory positions. While analyzing
inequality, we submit to ranking our students and often volunteer to do so. We give a student a grade of A for an insightful and impassioned interrogation of unequal schooling and volunteer to write a letter for the student, checking the box that says he or she is one of "the top ten" undergraduates we have taught in the last seven years. We check boxes that rank the student's "maturity," "originality," "clarity of expression," and so on. We would not have chosen these particular terms to describe the student's accomplishments. We do not need to say to the law school that we hope it will accept a student who is "the cream of the crop," who deserves a place at the top of the meritocracy. The recommendation form carries our judgments and converts them to numbers; the bureaucracy says the rest.

Formal assessments (such as grades and letters of recommendation) are important instruments mediating the effects of our work, but there are many others. At different moments, for example, we may find our work valued in terms of proper speech, correct prose, highbrow taste, national culture, the value of literacy, interpretive virtuosity, research "productivity," and so forth. It is as if we see ourselves in a distorting mirror, where our work may be valued in ways that are alien to our most deeply felt purposes. At such moments, it is understandable for us to turn away rather than analyze the refractive pattern of the mirror and what it might tell us about how our work functions within the larger system.

Thinking geographically about our work in English focuses on how meanings—intended or not—are extracted from our work through mediating forces, relationships, and modes of spatial organization. To put it in perhaps oversimplified, programmatic terms, geographical thinking considers:

1) how academic disciplines and universities organize physical space and interaction (for example, in offices and lounges, lecture halls, seminar rooms, local internship settings, and contact zones with surrounding neighborhoods);

2) how disciplinary practices manage space, enabling different forms of visibility, privacy, and interaction for different groups of faculty or students (for example, tracking populations of students to particular courses, campus locations, disciplines or careers; monitoring faculty/student contact through office and teaching assignments, workload and class size policies, use of graders and graduate assistants; defining appropriate and inappropriate uses of space through policies address-
ing issues such as sexual harassment, discrimination, and diversity; using peer work as a pedagogical tool in particular classrooms or electronic spaces);

3) how disciplines function across a multiplicity of spaces (for example, across spaces occupied by employers, mass media, disciplines, schools, or other communities; across classrooms, study abroad programs, community outreach programs, and electronically linked courses or populations);

4) how space shapes subjectivity by mediating disciplinary practices in ways often counter to their ideological content (for example, by tracking students in class-, race-, or gender-biased ways while using a "diverse" curriculum; by grading students for how well they critique inequality; by calling on students in an "open" classroom);

5) how our knowledge and professional identities are not only applied to but are also dialectically constituted by apparently external needs and relationships.

These are broad categories of concern, but they mark a field of inquiry that has been, until recently, difficult to pursue partly because we have lacked any viable disciplinary framework to advance it. Work in the humanities has tended to focus on ideology in ways that situate cultural artifacts and processes primarily in terms of historical time, intertextual relationships, authorship, and audience. These ways of contextualizing culture may allow geographical thinking, but they do not especially encourage it. As Edward Soja argues in Postmodern Geographies, it is only recently that critical social theory has emerged from a "carceral historicism" that polarized time and space, treating the former as the medium of history (for example, time as "historical becoming") and the latter as inertial and undialectical (19, 31-35). In geography, too, Soja notes a tendency to reduce the discipline’s focus to the "theoretically innocent representation of factual material describing the areal differentiation of the earth’s surface—to the study of outcomes . . . of dynamic processes best understood by others. Geography thus also treated space as the domain of the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile—a world of passivity and measurement rather than action and meaning" (36-37). Such an uncritical stance probably served most prominent geographers of the postwar period well, since as Soja points out, at mid-century more than half were involved in intelligence gathering activities, especially through the Office of Strategic Services (37).
In contrast, prominent humanities scholars of the postwar period were unlikely to have been attracted to those areas of their disciplines deemed by outsiders to be the most useful. In English studies, historicism has developed as one of many specialties that have often struggled to insulate themselves from the extensive general education “service” functions of the discipline—exactly where relationships between “external” constituencies and social needs are usually most explicit. The result has often been to devalue discourse about “service” relationships as necessarily suggesting a crude vocationalism that English faculty must struggle to escape, even if upper-division English courses and seminars often act as feeders to professional schools and employers in ways that are quite similar to introductory courses. While the discipline of geography emerged from the shadow of environmental determinism, humanities disciplines such as English studies have had to shed formalist notions of art and culture that placed them in a sphere autonomous from historical, economic, and social environments (Hugill and Foote 11-12). Under these conditions, discourse about geographic conditions that inform our work is difficult to sustain in English and humanities disciplines, even in the more progressive quarters of cultural studies and critical pedagogy.

Of course, recent arguments for disciplinary change in English are full of spatial metaphors, representing reform in terms of “redrawing boundaries,” “border crossing,” or developing the “arts of the contact zone.” For instance, Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn’s Redrawing the Boundaries refers to literature and literary criticism in terms of “an imagined space” constituted by “frontiers” and the “historical claims of territory” (5-7). Similarly, the dynamics of higher education are often described in commonplace metaphors of cultural warfare, representing group relations in terms of struggles over “territory” or “turf.” A close examination of these metaphors is beyond the scope of this essay, but it is important to note that such spatial metaphors are just as likely to conceal as they are to reveal how our work is mediated by environments. In addition to being the physical medium in which we move, perceive, and act, space is a perennial source of metaphors about knowing. But in metaphor, as well as in experience, space almost always stands as the known, self-evident term. As Neil Smith puts it:

Some truth or insight is revealed by asserting that an incompletely understood object, event or situation is another, where the other is assumed known: social definition (by race, for example) is called “location” because it reveals the connection between social experience and
Because space serves as a self-evident basis for metaphor and perception, almost any account of knowledge or action involves an account of it, though usually not an explicit theory. Indeed, the pervasiveness of space as metaphor impedes investigation of it as a material aspect of society.3

Yet, it is impossible to completely disentangle literal and figurative meanings of space, since space as a material reality is constituted through both physical and social factors. The gate in a gated community is both a material fact as well as a metaphor for policies and informal social practices that regulate who may enter and on what terms. Outsiders may be barred by road barriers, checkpoints, or electronically controlled entrances; or they may be merely warned away by a daunting maze of cul-de-sacs and circles or even by intuited signs of being unwelcome. Economic forces are also key factors structuring space in such communities. For instance, while Supreme Court decisions have made it illegal to discriminate in gated communities on the basis of race, gender, or nationality, the price of homes and the stringency of regulations often accomplishes the same exclusion (Beatley and Manning 181). Lastly, informal attitudes and practices are also important factors determining the lived character of space, enabling what architectural theorist Amos Rapoport has called the formation of “vernacular architectures.”

In “Vernacular Architecture and the Cultural Determinants of Form,” Rapoport argues that societies and institutions organize space to serve a variety of purposes, and spatial design is often primarily concerned with limiting unwanted interaction (285, 293, 297). As Rapoport puts it, “space is the three-dimensional extension of the world around us, the intervals, distances and relationships between people and people, people and objects, and objects and objects. Space organization is, then, the way in which these separations occur . . .” (293). In Rapoport’s terms, different cultures enact different lived senses of privacy, visibility, communality, or relationship through design of environments. Such designs may structure space through physical barriers or through symbolic “cues,” such as the thirty-foot circles swept by women around windbreaks that signal “family space” in some Australian aborigine camps (297-98).
One useful way to think about the relationship between design and lived experience is the way Henri Lefebvre discusses the relationship between "representations of space" and "representational spaces." Lefebvre's distinction emphasizes the unpredictable character of experience even in carefully designed and rationalized environments. "Representations of space" refers to abstract designs of physical space that dominant groups and their experts (architects, engineers, city planners) employ to imprint an order on the daily lives of inhabitants (360-62). In contrast, "representational spaces" are informed by everyday life in concrete environments, much like Rapoport's vernacular architectures. While such spaces are not free from the influence of planning, the meanings, values, and beliefs that are produced and reproduced in lived spaces can counter the intentions of the designers, which users accept, ignore, or resist. Hence, Lefebvre calls for a theory that would transcend representational space on the one hand and representations of space on the other, and [that] would be able properly to articulate contradictions (and in the first place the contradiction between these two aspects of representation). ... [S]patial contradictions "express" conflicts between socio-political interests and forces; it is only in space that such conflicts come effectively into play, and in so doing they become contradictions of space. (365)

In Lefebvre's view, space is designed, but not necessarily by any single identifiable person or group and often in ways that reflect contradictory interests.

For example, the design of a freeway may be based on a calculation of economic synergies produced by connecting two or more distant locations, in effect bringing them closer together. The design, however, may have immediate effects on neighborhoods that are fragmented, isolated, or destroyed by the roadway. No matter how these conflicts are resolved, the freeway design expresses relationships between contradictory socio-political interests. For commuters, the freeway may reinforce a sense of safety and privacy, removing the need to drive at slow speeds through urban neighborhoods. For residents, however, the freeway may threaten noise, pollution, and a loss of privacy. These interests may be represented by particular agents (architects, lawyers, city council members, neighborhood activists), but they are unlikely to be embodied by any single person or group. Cast in terms of Foucault's discussion of power relations, designs are "intentional and nonsubjective," having a clear "series of aims and objectives" not easily traceable to the work of any
particular individual or group (History 94-95). Moreover, as Lefebvre emphasizes, regardless of the purpose for which space is designed, it is also continually challenged, reproduced, or subverted by users. Returning to our example of the freeway, even after the freeway is built, neighborhood activists may continue to try to lower speed limits, build pedestrian walkways, and so on. Resistance may also surface in informal behavior, as would be the case, for instance, if local pedestrians interrupted traffic regularly by crossing the freeway, challenging the particular resolution of social contradictions achieved by experts’ design of the project.

Contradictions between the design and use of space also surface in our daily lives as educators. The design and use of classrooms, buildings, offices, programs, and curricula are inevitably responses to a complex interplay of local, regional, national, and global pressures, and geographical thinking must span these contexts and explain the relationships among them. For instance, Cary Nelson, Bill Readings, and others have commented on the ways in which universities have become increasingly “corporatized” in recent years. Specifically, universities have espoused values of “excellence,” “productivity,” and “efficiency”; competed for huge commercial grants to finance research and daily operations; insisted on more consumer-friendly approaches toward students to expand enrollments; and so on. While these are important developments in the culture of higher education, universities historically have developed in close relationship to corporate culture, organizing space in similar ways. In the corporate world, work historically has been marked by hierarchies in which privatized space and time mark status. The space of senior executives is marked by secretaries, anterooms, chains of command, all of which provide refuge from unregulated social contact and provide the privacy of the darkly paneled study with its soothing waterfalls. Environments in higher education have long shared many features of this organization of space, even if the teacher’s work often does not allow the physical distancing necessary to produce private space to the same degree as it does the executive manager. Hence, in higher education, faculty and administrators must often depend on techniques of physical and social distancing to structure privacy and to mark status. The use of graders and teaching assistants, the assignment of faculty to lecture halls or seminar rooms, the segmentation of student populations, the allocation of research time and office space—these are all ways of structuring space and creating privacy, and they promise aspiring faculty a degree of freedom from the hassle of corporatization and the endless demand to service customers.
What is different about the discussion of corporatization in recent years, however, is the urgency produced by the sense that in the new university setting the cultural mission of the humanities has declined in value. Even research faculty in the humanities are increasingly threatened with a loss of status and privacy that until recently had only been the lot of adjunct faculty and graduate students. As Readings argues in The University in Ruins, one reason we inhabit what he calls a “difficult space” in our daily lives is because, in some ways, the university is a “ruined institution” that can no longer credibly hold “the promise of being a microcosm of the nation-state” (171, 169, 167). That is, as capital has become increasingly mobile and global, the university, and especially the humanities, have been increasingly relieved of their mission to “safeguard and propagate national culture, because the nation-state is no longer the major site at which capital reproduces itself.” Hence, Readings points out that “administrators, government officials, and even radical critics now more and more often speak of the University in terms of ‘excellence’ instead of in terms of ‘culture’” (13). In Readings’ view, this shift signals a decline in the importance of the ideological function of universities. Just as General Motors targets markets and moves production on the basis of profitability and not on the basis of national loyalties, so universities have turned toward the market rather than to national or cultural missions to legitimate their functions.

As Readings, Nelson, and others argue, the end of the cold war and the internationalization of capitalist production have, no doubt, contributed to more skepticism about the value of inculcating national civic values, cultures, and loyalties through humanities education. However, we want to argue that our best prospects for renewal reside not in finding a new cultural mission for the changing times, but in finding new ways to exploit the geographical forces that are remaking our institutions and identities. The corporatization of the university poses dangers to humanities education that can never be adequately addressed by the critique of capitalism or social inequality, no matter how correct or ingenious. This is because the primary effects of humanities education—at least since early in the twentieth century—have resided not chiefly in the dissemination of disciplinary knowledge but in how curricula and other disciplinary practices organize space.

Curricula as Planning
The most obvious way that curricula organize space is in how they define cultural capital—the knowledge, language, and ways of living that give
persons mobility within education, the economy, and society. Curricula include or exclude the cultural capital of some groups more than others and in effect establish the social character of space by making the playing field uneven and thereby predisposing those who have cultural capital to succeed and those without it to fail. Universities, no less than gated communities, do not have to depend on explicitly discriminatory policies to limit unwanted social interaction. At the most basic level, tuition costs, financial aid policies, admissions requirements, institutional location and reputation, and the value of a degree on the job market determine who shows up in our classrooms. However, once students are in our classrooms, curricula delimit which forms of knowledge count as intellectual or cultural capital. Depending on how knowledge is delimited, academic progress becomes more difficult for some groups than for others. As Bruce Robbins puts it, “From the moment when knowledge of rap music or rape statistics or the genealogy of the word ‘homosexual’ is measured on examinations and counts towards a degree, there has been some change . . . in access to credentials” (373). As our earlier example about Malcolm X suggests, the difference between affirming a form of cultural capital as an object of study and affirming the presence of groups who identify themselves with it may be great indeed. Today, it is generally possible to study ethnic vernaculars in college, while it is not possible to establish the legitimacy of their use as a regular medium of educational discourse.

However, granting the limits of curricula (or of gated communities, for that matter) to establish the social character of space does not negate their functioning as a form of spatial design. Although they are not the only factors, curricula, pedagogy, and grading practices filter the social character of space in higher education and in the workplace in significant and demonstrable ways.

The opening of the literary canon and the increasing influence of sociological studies of cultural taste in the humanities have helped deepen our understanding of the role of cultural capital in reproducing social inequality. However, we would argue that this represents only one way that curricula organize space. Certainly, the work we do with our students can change hearts and minds, and this is something we value. However, as Evan Watkins has recently argued, it is highly questionable that English, or any humanities discipline, achieves its primary effects by disseminating the research that faculty produce or even through course content. Watkins makes the point by comparing the structural position of English in higher education to that of advertising agencies in the general economy:
no comparison will show that English occupies a structurally comparable position to advertising agencies in the circulation of [cultural production]... Work in advertising is organized to circulate what the advertising agency produces as the means of selling its clients' products. Work in English, in contrast, is by no means organized to circulate what a permanent faculty produces, nor even what they teach. Indeed, the percentage of total labor time in English generated by a permanent faculty is relatively very small. For administrative and clerical personnel, graduate assistants in many English departments at least, "temporary" and nontenured faculty all work in English as well. And most obviously, in very large numbers, so do students. That is, total labor time in English is a matter primarily of a mobile labor force circulated to English. As a location of cultural production, English is organized around this circulation of a mobile labor force to the location, rather than to facilitate the circulation of what is produced by the concrete labor of permanent faculty. (238)

While Watkins' point here may be obvious, there is much in our situations as humanists that encourages us to deny it. Like our colleagues in the sciences, we want our expertise to be recognized as inherently valuable, and especially now that our cultural mission seems increasingly called into question. We want to counter views that represent our work as merely decorative or mechanical. Humanistic study does more than just enforce good grammar on the way to highbrow polish and taste. We know this, and it is one reason why the logic of the culture wars has proved so captivating to humanities scholars of every stripe in discussions of reform. The trope of cultural warfare dramatizes the fact that our concrete labor is supremely consequential and reinstates a sense of cultural mission as our overriding concern. Conservatives such as Allan Bloom say that English exists to preserve and disseminate the cultural treasures of humanism, while many leftist cultural materialists hope to counter the myths of humanism—or, for that matter, advertising and mass culture—through reasoned critique. But this high-stakes drama obscures how our concrete labor functions as part of a designed environment, often producing different effects than those we intend.

The logic of the culture wars breaks down as soon as we situate humanities education within a larger geography of cultural production. Students, teaching assistants, and adjunct faculty do not disseminate what it means to be a formalist or deconstructionist or Marxist critic. Instead, they inculcate and assess cultural knowledge and skills, especially those that are "transferrable" to other areas, enabling students to be successful
within higher education and the economy. Moreover, work in literary studies—no less than in composition—is positioned to function in this way, even if it is in relation to professional schools and employers rather than undergraduate disciplines. Consider that data from the U.S. Department of Education shows that although thirty to fifty thousand bachelor's degrees were granted in English each year in the 1980s, only six hundred to one thousand doctorates were granted each year between 1980 and 1994. Unlike engineering or graphic design, literary studies clearly has only weak links to specific workplaces outside education that demand the specific expertise it produces. As a consequence, a degree in literary studies most often functions, to use Watkins' term, "nonspecifically"; that is, the degree certifies general cultural skills that are especially valued in venues where English majors are typically placed in the job market—in advertising, secondary education, public relations, and so on. Even fields such as gender or race studies must often depend on rationalizing their value in terms of nonspecific utility—for instance, they enable students to more effectively negotiate diversity in a given profession or workplace.

Obviously, no academic discipline develops in complete independence from the needs of the institutions and society that support it. Humanities disciplines do have clients—most notably, students as well as various institutional sponsors. But in the humanities, the politics of defining social needs are comparatively indirect and obscure. Humanistic study is useless; or, if justified in terms of practicality, its use values—the benefits of communication, critical thinking or taste, social graces, or whatever—are distinctive mainly in that they pertain almost everywhere. Under such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that power relations shaping humanities disciplines are difficult to trace. Who are our clients? Why students, of course. But students as a group are a loosely organized, short-term constituency, voting with their feet in some sense but they are without much power to shape policy directly. Others speak for them in the design of institutions, curricula, and policy. Hence, in institutional practice, the signifier "students" often functions as a mandatory but empty reference, a vessel that faculty, employers, and administrators struggle to fill in their efforts to advance other interests.

In contrast, work in planning and design is generally conducted in explicit relationships of patronage with clients who are likely to give primacy to their own functional and economic needs. Accordingly, thinking of curricula in terms of planning enables us to see our work differently and foregrounds issues of power and complicity in relatively direct ways. For instance, in the history of office-building design, the turn
toward building upward rather than outward in the late nineteenth century was less a matter of aesthetic, ethical, or intellectual concerns than it was an attempt to save money for clients by exploiting the emerging technology of steel frame construction. Skyscrapers can be gleaming monuments or bleak, soulless boxes, depending on who is looking, but they tangibly reflect the calculation—first realized by architects such as Louis Sullivan and quickly understood by their corporate clients—that steel-frame construction costs less than urban real estate (see Kunstler 64-67; Duffy).

Of course, the design of office buildings must reflect the needs of the users (for example, customers, clerks, executives) who will actually inhabit the space as well as those of owner-clients, and the balance between the needs of clients and users can be struck in any number of ways. Since management and capital usually have an upper hand in the design process, the needs of users are usually represented from their perspective, sometimes to the point of turning “the user” into a mere mechanical part of production. For instance, Frank Lloyd Wright’s design of the Larkin building—a mail-order house built in Buffalo, New York in 1904—reflects the increasing dominance of corporate owners over production. According to architectural historian Francis Duffy, it appeared in at least one handbook for office managers of the period as “an exemplary, if not anonymous, ‘modern office building’” representative of “routinised and factory-like” technology, and of accommodations for employees “low in status” (265). Duffy notes how even furniture design for this building was “in league with work study; the seat hinged to the clerical desk restricts freedom of movement, saves space, is entirely rational, and effectively expresses the degradation of the clerk” (268).

In designing offices, Duffy emphasizes four major categories that planners must consider: office technology, office organization, building construction, and real estate factors. Duffy refers to the first two categories of office technology and organization as “internal” factors that directly depend on users and their needs—for example, the way space reflects social hierarchies in the client organization as well as the physical flow of work, use of machinery, and so on. The second two categories of concern that designers must address, in Duffy’s account, are building construction (for example, cost and availability of materials) and real estate. In Duffy’s terms, these are “external” factors because they are beyond the control of designers or their clients (although, we would add, not necessarily independent of human agency). Indeed, in our view, the distinction between internal and external factors in building design, as in humanities reform, may be more complicated than Duffy’s terminology.
suggests. High real estate values in urban areas fueled the spread of steel-framed office buildings. But, as James Kunstler points out, the reverse was also true: the spread of office buildings inflated the value of real estate. Corporations could not only use expensive real estate more efficiently by building upwards, they could also increase the value of their property by concentrating populations and markets in an area where they held land (Kunstler 64-67).

A curriculum is not an office building, of course. The potential for analogy, however, invites us to shift our gaze from how curricula disseminate knowledge to how curricula organize the flow of work and persons in a designed environment, establishing social hierarchies and patterns of interaction among workers. As in the case of office buildings, the design of curricula reflects needs that may significantly diverge from the needs of the people performing the actual labor of teaching and learning. Whatever their content, general education courses help to stabilize enrollments, recruit majors, and legitimize disciplinary knowledge for large audiences. They establish a pool of students in the first or second year of college whose performance has been measured in multi-section or very large courses that allow (mistakenly or not) a basis of comparison between them. Upper-division courses, in contrast, are scarcer in number and are often viewed by faculty as the more rewarding assignments. They offer an opportunity to teach smaller classes that are composed of students who have expressed interest in the advertised subject matter. In turn, they allow faculty more freedom to advertise and directly apply their specialized expertise and with less oversight than is typically associated with large or multi-section lower-division courses (which must be recognizably the "same" course across different sections or semesters). Hence, assignment to specialized upper-division courses often functions to mark status and autonomy for the most powerful or reputable faculty within a department, situating work within a different regime of visibility than lower-division courses. In addition, the very existence of smaller classes at the advanced level is frequently dependent on the existence of lecture hall or multi-section courses that free resources for small (and more expensive) upper-division courses usually taught by tenure-line faculty. Since certain forms of space are required if other desired forms are to be established, the design of space accomplished by curricula can never be based solely on course content or on ideals of culture, nationality, citizenship, or common knowledge.

Of course, not all forms of design rigidly impose on inhabitants the rationality of planners and their clients. In the field of urban design, a
classic statement of rebellion against the imperious regimentation imposed by modernist designers can be found in Jane Jacob's *The Death and Life of American Cities*. Jacobs accuses modernist planners of so rationalizing and regimenting urban space that they have created a "Great Blight of Dullness," taking no account of the creativity of users of that space. As Jacobs puts it, "city planning neither respects spontaneous self-diversification among city populations nor contrives to provide for it. It is curious that city designers seem neither to recognize this force of self-diversification nor to be attracted by the esthetic problems of expressing it" (qtd. in Harvey 74-75). In the process of curricular reform, a similar balance is inevitably struck between the rationality of designers and the possibility of "self-diversification" among users. In one sense, curriculum is essentially about planning from above. Curricular planning stipulates course content, degree requirements, who is qualified to teach, assessment procedures, and so forth. However, there also may be considerable difference between what a curriculum stipulates and what happens in a classroom. Some teachers must work within systems of school management that deny teachers choices through means such as "teacher-proof" curricula and intrusive testing regimes. But more often, curricula allow (or cannot forestall) some degree of "spontaneous self-diversification" of teachers and students. Still, it is mistaken to say that a curriculum is therefore nothing more than a Rorschach blot that teachers can effortlessly shape to their own purposes. Teachers and students shape curricula to their own purposes, but the clay resists, yielding some shapes more easily than others.

As part of a designed environment, curricula pattern and reflect the flow of populations through educational institutions, establishing links between courses, programs, schools, and potential careers. This is why, whether we care to think in these terms or not, a curriculum must harness the possibilities of a geography. In physical terms, the viability of curricula depends directly on, among other things, the physical layout of a campus (students must be able to travel easily from one course to the next; programs need building space), access to natural and financial resources, employer needs and labor markets, and the availability of faculty and student populations. Agronomy programs fare best near agricultural sites; oceanography programs, near the ocean. However, our relationships with geographical realities are never wholly determined either. Whatever faculty think students need to know, employers and professional schools hire and admit students based on their own ideas of what is considered adequate preparation. But they are limited in their
choices by the labor pools available to them, which have been partly constituted by our curricular and grading decisions.

To illustrate how curricula function as a form of planning, we want to turn to the example of the development of medical humanities curricula at the urban state university where one of us teaches. This case illustrates how large economic forces shaping local geography impinge on humanities education and how curricular responses to these forces function, often in unspoken ways, to structure space and organize the flow of work and persons.

In the last ten years, this university has been actively positioning itself to exploit what promises to be a lucrative area of collaboration between commercial and academic interests in the next century—the revolution in biotechnology. In particular, university officials are promoting initiatives that may help the university capitalize on the rapid development of a commercial biotech research corridor near the university. Evidence of this can be seen all around the university, most obviously in the construction of a lavish, privately funded, cancer research center across the street, along with a community botanical garden and nature center and a university-funded science and technology building on campus. The forces reshaping local geography stop neither at the border of the campus nor its academic culture. Indeed, the university has recently explored ways of involving scientists associated with the private biotech initiatives in academics. Recently, for instance, a campus-wide faculty committee overseeing PhD programs has considered whether scientists at the private research center should be allowed to chair doctoral committees, even if they are adjunct faculty members not teaching courses at the university.

This may not seem to have much to do with the humanities. However, the English department has seized on an opportunity to respond to the biotech initiative, partly because its vitality depends on demonstrating that it is not aloof from changing student and university needs. Three years ago, for instance, several tenured faculty members initiated a sophomore-level medical humanities writing course and procured a university grant to develop the course. Drawing on the allure of the biotech initiatives, the medical humanities writing course has been one of the most visible and successful features of the writing program, elevating the status of writing in the department and the university. The curriculum addresses the politics of medical perception and representation; how language shapes interactions between doctors, patients, and institutions; and so on. Moreover, untenured faculty teaching in the program have been able to benefit professionally from their participation because their contributions in this
area have been far more visible than faculty who have taught traditional writing courses.

This is all well and good. There is, however, a story of complicity here as well, a story that becomes clearer the more we shift our gaze from curricula as a mode of dissemination to curricula as a strategy for organizing space. The medical humanities writing "classroom," after all, is not just a classroom but a site for the convergence of populations that construct relationships between groups and different forms of knowledge and that regulate the circulation of persons in the institution. Not all of this is a matter of explicit policy; often space is structured (just as in urban neighborhoods) through economic pressures and unspoken social affinities. For instance, in theory, enrollment in the medical humanities writing program is open to any student, and any writing teacher in the program (from full professor to graduate student) is allowed teach the course. In reality, however, the course has received funds from the six-year medical program, and medical students enroll early. Hence, they end up filling up about sixty-five percent of available seats. The staffing of these courses, too, is a considerably less accidental than it might first appear. Of the six tenure-line faculty who have taught sophomore-level writing in the last three years, almost all have done their teaching in the medical humanities sections of the program, which comprises only four out of an average of seventeen sections of the sophomore writing course. In effect, then, the medical humanities writing course, despite its innovative subject matter and approach to writing, has been functioning as a de facto tracking mechanism, matching populations of students who are, on average, among the best prepared academically, with faculty who are among the most highly credentialed writing teachers. The course has created a degree of class privilege within the university's writing space in ways that are not all that different from the way the race and class makeup of local neighborhoods are shaped by what one knows, who one knows, and who can pay.

We emphasize the role of geographies even at the level of interaction and privilege because as literacy educators we often too narrowly identify ourselves with innovations in curriculum, pedagogy, or research—which are the forms of concrete labor closest to our hearts—and we tend to downplay the ways our work functions as part of a designed environment. Too often the tendency is to consign issues of space to hallway niggling about offices and schedules or to consider such issues to be the province of administrators or corporations. What is troubling is that in developing medical humanities curricula, participating faculty talked extensively
about content and pedagogy but hardly at all about the geographical context that made reform possible, and in some ways, even inevitable. If we wish to gain a stronger sense of agency in shaping reform, we will have to develop new ways to exploit regional geographies and conceive new ways of theorizing not only what and how we teach but how curricula organize student populations and social interaction as well as the flow of work and status in our institutions.

**Space, Curricula, and Subjectivity**

Designing curricular space is, whether or not intentional, an act of shaping subjectivity. Conceived as a mode of dissemination, curricula present the knowledge and modes of inquiry of disciplines, thereby shaping student ideology. However, as soon as we turn our attention from content to space, we must consider more than just ideology. University or school classrooms, like other communities, organize, in Rapoport's terms, a sense of space as "the intervals, distances and relationships between people and people, people and objects, and objects and objects" (293). Whether students come from exclusive suburban communities, ethnic or racial ghettos, or mixed urban settings, they have come not only to internalize these intervals, distances, and relationships as ways of thinking, but also to embody them in their expectations of privacy, styles of cohabitation, sexual desires, perceptions of danger or well-being or disgust, and so forth. A white female student, for instance, may have questioned the racial prejudices of her upbringing in school, only to find herself locking the doors of her car as she drives through the black part of town. A male student who rejects sexism in his courses may still find himself as excited as ever by blatantly sexist objectifications of women in the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue. These responses can be talked about, justified, or altered, but they entail changes in embodiment and not just a change of intellectual "approach."

Obviously, the ways that we are embodied in any space is always partly a matter of discourse: we shift between speech styles and registers, topics and subject matter, and appropriate styles of dress in different social settings. However, our traditional notions of "speech context" in linguistics, "kairos" or "rhetorical situation" in rhetoric, "cultural code" in semiotics, and the like often miss the ways in which designed environments shape subjectivity through regulatory norms that often superecede subjects' conscious representations. In an interview conducted in 1977, Michel Foucault makes a similar point when discussing the object of his investigation in *The History of Sexuality*: "If power takes hold on the
body, this isn’t through its having first to be interiorised in people’s consciousness” ("History" 186). In Foucault’s view, the discourse of sexuality works its effects not mainly in terms of its messages—that is, its direct suasive force on individuals—but by optimizing the design of space. Even though sex was unlikely to be a topic of discussion in French secondary schools in the eighteenth century, Foucault shows how school space was becoming increasingly sexualized during that period (27). Despite the fact that “sex was hardly spoken of at all in these institutions,” it was a “constant preoccupation,” evident in the “architectural layout, the rules of discipline, and their whole internal organization.” It was considered explicitly in the school’s design, in the “space for classes, the shape of the tables, the planning of recreation lessons, the distribution of the dormitories (with or without partitions, with or without curtains), the rules for monitoring bedtime and sleep periods—all this referred, in the most prolix manner, to the sexuality of children” (History 27-28). Moreover, Foucault argues that the effects of spatial designs were often, intentionally or not, directly counter to stated aims. For instance, the war on onanism in schools and orphanages in the nineteenth century had the ironic effect of intensifying children’s sexual interests in their own bodies. By designing environments where children could be watched in an effort to prevent masturbation, children were stimulated to explore “deviancy”—in this case, the erotic potential of their own bodies.

For us, the issue is not how space affects sexuality but rather how the design of space structures the work and subjectivity of teachers and students. Our point is that students are shaped not only through debate or persuasion, but through many activities not simply reducible to their conceptual content. They learn to sustain regimens that often vary for different grades, levels, genders, or other social groupings of students—for example, how to keep attentively immobile postures (or to move purposefully in the “open” classroom), how to control bodily impulses (or to expressively enact approved impulses at designated times), how to perform timed tasks (or to show capacity for “self-motivation” in independent work), how to respond when called on in class (or to volunteer to speak), or how to sustain or avoid eye contact. All these forms of discipline convey a wide variety of messages, but they also materialize bodies, structuring habits of physical presence and feeling as well as habits of thinking. Some forms of discipline may be consciously planned by experts, but some forms may be improvised by teachers or other school personnel (albeit in the context of their “training”) and some may even be peer-enforced. A playground or cafeteria may be (self-) segregated by
race, possibly reproducing a racialized sense of safe and dangerous spaces already established in students' lives outside school. Even a simple practice such as calling on students—although it need not teach anything in particular—creates a form of random visibility that powerfully changes the feel of classroom space, shaping students differently depending on the success of their performances in the spotlight of the teacher's call.

The structuring of physical space and discipline may be more self-consciously practiced at lower-grade levels, but it is a mistake to see such factors as extraneous to the college situation. In the medical humanities classes we discussed in the last section, for instance, the curriculum interrogates the authority of medical storytelling, but it is the difficult space of the classroom and its relation to larger environments that shape the ways students and teachers feel the force of this questioning. The medical students in the class are part of a tight-knit community, sharing residential space in a campus dormitory, social occasions organized specifically by and for them, common academic schedules, and so forth. Often they work as clinical observers following doctors on rounds in a university-affiliated hospital that primarily serves the urban poor. Of course, this organization of space and movement does not unilaterally determine how they perceive the curriculum or medical practice. However, these conditions do create a situation in which there is pressure for medical students to respond as a group and to avoid dissent that might risk alienating them from their peers. By observing at the shoulder of doctors, they literally see the hospital and patients from the position of medical experts. And although medical students are often vexed by what they see in clinical settings, it seems clear to us that non-medical students are more likely to identify with patients and the ways that they may be objectified or dehumanized by medical practices.

The teacher's capacity to question medical representation is also shaped by the position of this course in the larger curriculum through which students circulate. This is, after all, an English class that appears on a schedule with biochemistry, anatomy, and clinical observations. These subjects make different assumptions about medical representation, and, as we mentioned earlier, medical students are often quite aware that their performance in science courses will count much more in determining their standing within their programs and among their cohorts than their performance in an English course. The highly competitive nature of the medical program intensifies this effect. Indeed, in this context, it is a mistake to speak of student grade consciousness in generic terms, since the value of an A is different in different programs and areas of the
curriculum, a fact that encourages students to focus their efforts accordingly.

Such realities perpetually cast into question the authority of a humanities-based critique of medical representation. This erosion of faculty authority in medical humanities may seem ironic, given the fact that more highly credentialed faculty are being assigned to these courses than to other writing courses. However, this circumstance merely underscores the ways that this case is representative of the geographic situation of the humanities, where part-time faculty and teaching assistants account for more than sixty percent of the overall labor pool for teaching. Consider, for instance, how the positioning of humanities courses in the larger curriculum may affect the authority of TAs, whatever course they are teaching. While students may appreciate praise and attention, they may also read the given TAs willingness to engage demands and needs ignored in more prestigious quarters of the curriculum as marks of immaturity or lack of rigor. Students who enroll in so-called weed-out courses for scientific professions (such as Chemistry I) may regard a TA-taught section of Introduction to Fiction as a kind of academic coffee-break, especially if the grade curve is higher than those in other courses, if the TA attends to underprepared students in ways the chemistry professor does not, and if the TA's pedagogical approach recognizes a wide range of traditionally non- or post-disciplinary forms of knowledge (for example, students' personal stories of marriage as commentary about The Awakening). This effect will be amplified if exemption or credit-by-exam policies enable students with better academic preparation to bypass the "required" writing or humanities courses, in effect mapping this space as a ghetto for teachers and students lacking true academic credentials. Although even inexperienced TAs are often able to project a sense of personal authority that complicates their positioning in institutional space, they always face the danger that their messages will be heard more in terms of their positioning than in terms of what they say. A female TA who wishes to emphasize feminist issues in a writing class—whatever her knowledge or skill with these issues—is operating at a distinct disadvantage vis-à-vis some students. She must overcome not only ideological resistance to feminism but also her position as a female teacher of a basic course taught by TAs to students "unfortunate enough" to have failed to make themselves exempt from taking this course.

A precondition of reform is an understanding of the dynamics of our geographical positioning—in the material conditions of the classroom, in disciplines, and across institutional "borders" and communities. In The
University in Ruins, Readings argues that change comes from “the difficult space—neither inside nor outside—where one is” (171). Since the university is a “ruined institution” that can no longer hold “the promise of being a microcosm of the nation-state,” we must learn to function differently because the “ruins of culture’s institution are simply there, where we are, and we have to negotiate among them” (169, 167, 171). The metaphor for reform of “dwelling in ruins” means working for change with the understanding that our actions work at different levels of immediacy and estrangement. We interact with real persons and places, persuading, resisting, immediately reshaping our environment. Institutions also have a weight that elicits, guides, and co-opts our actions, estranging intention from effect (although never in a wholly predictable way) and frustrating utopian plans for redemption. How we live in space is not an abstract question about generalized “teachers” and “students”; rather, it is a question about how specific groups—faculty, teaching assistants, medical students, women, ethnic or racial groups, and others—occupy the forms available to them within schools and communities.

Of course, even if the debate about reform shifts toward such questions of geographical interaction and positioning as we are advocating, there is a sense in which debate remains debate, producing new ways to critique education without necessarily altering campus geographies. Indeed, in some ways, a geographical understanding of reform highlights features of our environment that are difficult to change, and this may be one reason that debate has veered away from such issues. Humanities faculty and our professional organizations can and should be more active in seeking changes in university hiring and labor practices, admissions policies, community relations, and so on, but it is hard to win large-scale changes on such matters. However, as our example of the medical humanities course suggests, geography is intimate as well as expansive, and shifting towards a geographic perspective enables us not only to consider how our existing practices organize space, but also encourages us to develop alternatives as well. Some of the problems we have raised concerning our medical humanities writing program may be intractable, but many are not, especially if we consciously consider geographical relations in our planning. For example, English faculty could work towards putting medical and non-medical students on a more equal footing in enrolling for the class or expand the course in ways that target a broader cross-section of the student body.

Developing a detailed reform proposal is beyond the scope of this essay, but we should note that there are many programs that are experi-
menting with new ways of organizing space in English studies, particularly through service learning, learning communities, community literacy projects, and electronically mediated forms of English education. These reforms often focus not only on changing course content or the interpretive methodologies informing English curriculum, but also on "breaking down walls" between English studies and local communities and between students' experience in the classroom and their lifeworlds beyond it. Certainly, we do not wish to offer any blanket endorsement of such programs (or, for that matter, of medical humanities programs). We are especially wary because both "service" and "outreach" have typically been defined by universities in disabling ways. If universities, as we discussed earlier, have often devalued service, they have also often defined outreach in terms of paternalistic, missionary relationships between faculty and students and local communities that are to be "helped." We are encouraged that some of these dangers have been criticized in recent literature on service learning (see, for example, Schutz and Gere; Herzberg) and are explicitly disavowed by some programs, such as the University of Michigan Center for Community Service and Learning that stipulates that "student activity" must be "co-defined by the community." Nevertheless, the challenge of service learning is to imagine, and to help students imagine, such reciprocity not only as an abstract goal, but also as a lived and embodied practice. This is a difficult challenge, and meeting it will require us to sustain discussion about how universities and schools have historically structured public space, how professional subjectivity has been shaped by the design of space, and how we as well as our students may be changed by developing new forms of contact with outside communities.

Because our space is difficult, we may have something to learn from architectural theorists (such as Peter Eisenman) who invite us to consider how every form of dwelling presents specific possibilities of intimacy, privacy, visibility, agency, and interaction. In Eisenman's theory of occupiable form, who and where we are can never be disentangled because the possibilities of our interactions with others are always shaped through the design of environments. In making this argument, Eisenman elaborates how architecture both expresses and produces particular ways of life. Our concepts of privacy, as well as our embodied senses of shame, tact, discretion, desire, safety, and so on are not so much invented as they are discovered as possibilities in the forms we occupy and the materials we find for building. "No cave-man ever set out to find a two-bedroom cave," as Jeffrey Kipnis puts it. Eisenman joins Kipnis in arguing that "all
of the institutions ... from the most private to the most public, become possibilities through man's occupation of form, and most importantly, architectural form" (167). As literacy educators, we have a role in both designing these forms and in responding creatively as users of the forms we have inherited. However, exploiting old forms and discovering new ones is a process that can never be fully autonomous or purely ideological. Consequently, if we are to collectively engage the problem of reform, we must develop a discourse that gives priority to the intimacies of geography, to the interplay of local desires and global forces that constitute the difficult space where we are.

Notes

1. This proliferation of theories of geography and space and their cross-pollination with critical theory have taken place since the mid-1980s. Moreover, the institutionalization of cultural studies, feminist theory, and various poststructuralisms has influenced work in the social science of geography and beyond. See, for instance, Gregory, Jackson, Massey, Rose, and Soja.

2. For example, Graff tells a humorous anecdote about a whimsical undergraduate who focuses more on grades than the warring ideologies that she encounters in two of her courses. The student has a history professor who celebrates the triumph of "freemarket capitalism" across the globe and a literature professor who debunks such claims as "hegemonic ideology." The punchline comes when the student is asked which course she prefers and replies, "Well, I'm getting an A in both" (105). The story is funny because it baldly shows how grades trump ideology—or, to put it in more formal, theoretical terms, how exchange values trump use values in higher education. However, instead of regarding this as a story about the naivete or perversity of students, we also might see it as a story about competing uses of academic knowledge. What the student sees may be simply what she imagines admissions committees and employers will see. And however much employers and professional schools extol the value of the humanities in official pronouncements, a grade of A on a transcript in English 232 or History 232 likely functions more as an index of "communication proficiency" or "people skills" than of coherent moral judgments about American capitalism.

3. In a recent article, Reynolds makes a similar point in relation to the "imagined geographies" of composition. She notes that even as a number of
"imagined geographies" of composition (as frontier or city, as work on the margin, and so forth) have become commonplace in research, the real space of writers, teachers, campuses, classrooms, hotels and so forth has by and large been neglected and rendered transparent. As she puts it, "Composition needs to develop ways to study space differently that might close the gap between imagined geographies and material conditions for writing..." (30). We would add that this gap needs to be closed in other humanities fields at least as much as in composition. Because it has often been subject to harsh conditions, composition has arguably been more attentive to material conditions of labor than most humanities fields. And because such harsh conditions are becoming more typical across the humanities, composition may be in a strong position to shape the broader discourse of humanities reform in articulating the gap between imagined and real geographies.

4. For instance, Howard tells of an attempt by the students in her linguistics course, titled Language, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States, to speak African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) for one day in the classroom. (All but two of twenty-eight students in the class, in which a majority of the students were people of color, voted to go ahead with the proposal.) Howard, who is white, called the attempt "a failure" despite the class' study of the dialect, its Creole history, and the students' professed belief that AAVE was by no means a "lesser" or "incorrect" variety of English (267, 269). Howard describes the "confusion and division" developing in the classroom about this proposal on the part of both white students (who feared appearing "prejudiced" by trying to speak AAVE) and black students (who "did not want to be publically associated with the language" when it came time to speak it in class). Howard concludes, "Code switching to AAVE is profoundly constrained," and in this experiment, "AAVE emerged neither as a dialect nor a language, but as a discourse position (in) which people may not learn from one another in classrooms" (270).

5. The authors wish to thank the University of Missouri Research Board for providing funding in support of this research.

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