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## Critical Discourse Analysis and Rhetoric and Composition

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Over the past two decades, critical discourse analysis has emerged as a major new multidisciplinary approach to the study of texts and contexts in the public sphere. Developed in Europe, CDA has lately become increasingly popular in North America, where it is proving especially congenial to new directions in rhetoric and composition. This essay surveys much of this recent literature, noting how rhet/comp has incorporated CDA methodology in a variety of studies of inequality, ethics, higher education, critical pedagogy, news media, and institutional practices. CDA uses rigorous, empirical methods that are sensitive to both context and theory, making it ideal for the demands of a range of projects being developed in our field.

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Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach to textual study that aims to explicate abuses of power promoted by those texts, by analyzing linguistic/semiotic details in light of the larger social and political contexts in which those texts circulate. In the words of Ruth Wodak, one of the field's founders and foremost practitioners, "CDA [is] fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control when these are manifested in

language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, and legitimized by language use” (53).

The roots of CDA are varied, ranging from Frankfurt School critical theory to Hallidayan systemic-functional linguistics. Among the many diverse theorists exercising a continuing influence on the field are Foucault, Bourdieu, Gramsci, Habermas, and Giddens. The immediate forerunner of CDA was critical linguistics (CL), a largely linguistic approach to text analysis developed in the United Kingdom by Gunther Kress, Roger Fowler, Bob Hodge, and other students of M. A. K. Halliday in the 1970s. CDA evolved beyond CL by incorporating more social, cognitive, and rhetorical theory, thus broadening the scope of analysis. Key milestones of this period include the publication of Norman Fairclough’s *Language and Power* in 1989; the founding of the field’s flagship journal, *Discourse and Society* in 1990; and a small organizational symposium of the field’s founders (Fairclough, Wodak, Kress, Teun van Dijk, and Theo van Leeuwen) in Amsterdam in January 1991.

Critical discourse analysis is based on a number of distinctive principles, including these cited by Fairclough and Wodak:

- CDA addresses social problems.
- Power relations are discursive.
- Discourse constitutes society and culture.
- Discourse does ideological work.
- Discourse is historical.
- The link between text and society is mediated.
- Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory.
- Discourse is a form of social action. (271–80)

These principles resonate with the interests of many scholars around the world in a variety of disciplines, as indicated by the growing number of scholarly journals that routinely publish CDA research; CDA monographs and anthologies; doctoral dissertations and master’s theses using CDA as their primary mode of analysis; and scholarly networks, working groups, seminars, panels, and conferences devoted to CDA.

Since traditional schools of CDA (see appendix for details) have European roots and a European orientation, scholars in other parts of the world have

tended to make adaptations suitable to their own local or regional circumstances. This is no less true in the United States and Canada, where many scholars—including an increasing number who are doing work in rhetoric and composition or a closely related field—combine established CDA approaches with methods borrowed from their home disciplines, and vice versa. This transdisciplinary borrowing was especially evident at the first-ever conference on North American CDA, held in May 2011 at the University of Utah. Although the twenty-two presenters, all from the US and Canada, repeatedly cited the work of Fairclough, Wodak, van Dijk, and others in that group, most of them embellished these traditional CDA approaches with methods from a variety of disciplines (including especially rhetoric and composition, education, and communication), many making extensive use of rhetorical analysis and of complex longitudinal studies and institutional histories, ethnographic methods, and large archival corpora—tools that are quite familiar to rhet/com specialists. They cited many names familiar to those in the field—Gee, Hall, Kress, Heath, the New London Group. And this is no accident. These disciplines, in varying degrees, are all receptive to principles of CDA and to their essentially *rhetorical* character.

Rhetoric and composition has always been concerned with the power of spoken and written discourse, in particular the ways in which language can be used to persuade audiences about important public issues. If anything, such interest has increased in recent times, constituting what Mike Rose has called a “public turn” (291). CDA aligns itself with this tradition in attending to purpose, situation, genre, diction, style, and other rhetorical variables, but also supplements it in a number of ways:

1. CDA systematically grounds its analyses in both quantitative and qualitative attention to linguistic details.
2. CDA routinely engages texts that reflect inequality or other abuses of power.
3. As a consequence of point 2, CDA is always critical and explanatory.
4. CDA draws on a wide repertoire of textlinguistic tools.
5. CDA is eclectic, drawing on a wide variety of scholarly disciplines, concepts, and research methods.
6. CDA typically makes use of multiple texts and even large corpora of texts.

7. CDA takes into account textual silences, implicatures, ambiguities, and other covert but powerful aspects of discourse.
8. In the interest of reaching a broad lay audience, CDA tries to minimize the use of academic jargon.

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CDA a powerful new methodology for rhetoric and composition, leading to unusually rich and versatile research. Rhet/comp has always been an interdisciplinary endeavor, borrowing from areas as diverse as literacy studies, computer technology, sociolinguistics, communication, and cultural studies to supplement the core discipline. CDA adds to this interdisciplinarity, providing a repertoire of precise, context-sensitive tools that can assist researchers, instructors, and students in interrogating power and ideology as they are

indexed and produced in specific instances of public discourse.

We see the study of writing practices as a sustained intellectual inquiry involving “the historical, the theoretical, and the practical” (Bazerman, “Case” 38). We posit CDA as a promising methodology for the study of many traditional objects of writing studies (e.g., multimodal written texts, composing practices, teaching praxis), and rhetorical criticism (e.g., diction, style, genre, argument, critical thinking). Moreover, CDA matches writing studies’ scholarly goal to understand the impacts of writing as a cultural practice and to examine the contexts of such practices historically, materially, and politically. As Janice Lauer reminds us, foundational studies in rhetoric and composition “[were] multidisciplinary not only in their theoretical bases but also in their modes of inquiry” (21). Multidisciplinarity remains important in emerging models of writing studies “concern[ed] with formation of textuality as a new center for contemporary rhetoric, writing pedagogy, studies of writing processes, analyses and history of literature, critical discourse analysis, and other forms of applied linguistics” (Miller 43). Thus, we see CDA fitting nicely within the increasingly expansive domain of rhetoric/composition/writing studies, because it enables writing researchers to move beyond traditional analytic modes of interpreta-

tion and criticism into examining the impact that contexts, power dynamics, and social interaction have on written texts and processes (see Bazerman and Prior, Introduction 2).

To this end, we suggest that CDA offers rhetoric/composition three embedded points of emphasis not generally covered by others: first, it explicitly draws our attention to issues of power and privilege in public and private discourse (helping scholars, for example, compare and contrast political discourses with pedagogical discourses, better achieving the goals of a critical pedagogy); second, it facilitates the parallel analysis of multiple, multimodal, and historical texts; and third, it provides a lens with which the researcher can coordinate the analysis of larger (macro) political/rhetorical purposes with the (micro) details of language. We also see CDA as a *timely* methodology, concurring with education scholar Cynthia Lewis, who argues that “because CDA examines the ideologies and social structures that instantiate and are instantiated by social practices, it is a theoretical and methodological approach that is particularly attractive at this time in the evolution of the field” (374). Increasingly, researchers conducting work in the field of rhetoric/composition are making similar arguments for CDA as a relevant methodology for writing studies. Douglas P. Downs’s widely cited work in writing-about-writing pedagogy has its roots in a doctoral dissertation using CDA; Pegeen Reichert Powell argues for the use of CDA as a methodology that may be used to “articulate explicitly the relationship between language practices and policies” (“Retention” 439; see also Huckin, “Critical”). Barbara Johnstone and Christopher Eisenhart’s *Rhetoric in Detail* offers snapshots of how CDA may be used in examining style, identity, agency, and entextualization. CDA represents an extension of discourse analysis, which itself, as Charles Bazerman and Paul Prior note, “has been an increasingly popular method for research, practical applications, and pedagogical assessment in composition, education, and applied linguistics/ESL” (Introduction 1) and can be applied to topics as varied as ecomposition (Walker) and writing center discourse (Pantelides and Bartesaghi).

Another contribution CDA offers the field is a training ground for future graduate students in the area of historical writing studies. Linda Ferreira-Buckley argues that it is a “neglect of methodological training that more than anything else prevents us from writing ‘better’ histories of rhetoric” (577), asserting that “theoretical sophistication does not obviate the need for practical training” (582). Indeed, CDA’s marriage of text and context, and its ability to consider history as part and parcel of analysis, provide an excellent

methodological basis for archival work and ethnographic study that doesn't sacrifice either theory or practice. While CDA is not shy about admitting its explicit gaze at power dynamics in discourse, it is also wise to heed Ferreira-Buckley's reminder that "one's theory and one's guiding approach are linked, they are not coterminous and . . . methodological approaches per se do not indicate a political position" (581). In what follows, we detail the ways in which CDA has offered and can continue to offer useful frameworks for rhetoric and composition research, paying particular attention to its use in merging both the macro- and micro-levels of discursive analysis.

### **Bridging the Gap: Where CDA and Writing Studies Overlap**

In this section, we describe ways in which rhetoric and composition research has tacitly integrated CDA methodology in attending to both textual details and social structures and how their combined use can facilitate studies of inequality, ethics, higher education, critical pedagogy, news media, and institutional practices.

#### ***Inequality***

Just as CDA quintessentially considers the ways in which power is embedded and circulated in discourse, rhetoric and composition too is compelled by the interplay between power and language. Cheryl Glenn explains that "rhetoric always inscribes the relation of language and power at a particular moment (including who may speak, who may listen or who will agree to listen, and what can be said)" (1–2). This connection between power and language has already been examined by a number of rhetoric and composition scholars concerned with issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality, even leading to first-year writing readers dedicated to investigating the issues (see, for example, Bizzell and Herzberg's *Negotiating Difference*, and Paul Eschholz, Alfred Rosa and Virginia Clark's *Language Awareness*). As a field, we have long benefited from (socio) linguistic research on inequality and discourse. For example, Geneva Smitherman's *Talkin' That Talk* explicitly recognizes the work of CDA in drawing attention to the "socio-cultural rules" of language use "within a paradigm of social transformation" (7–8). Smitherman's significant contributions to the development of the field and understanding of the tensions between African American Vernacular English and Standard Edited English cannot be denied. Similarly, James Paul Gee's work on defining "big-D" Discourse as necessarily constructing insiders and outsiders has influenced many in exploring the relationships between language, culture, and inequality (*Introduction* 23). James

Sledd has also worked on power differentials in language, linguistic dominance (see “Students’ Right to Their Own Language”), and power imbalances between adjunct and tenured workers in composition (Freed).

There is also significant research on discourses about race and gender in the labor of rhetoric and composition. Scholars such as Linda Brodkey, Sharon Crowley, Susan Miller, and Eileen Schell have analyzed the ways in which composition labor is discursively constructed as women’s work. Similarly, Jessica Enoch’s work shows that rhetorical instruction is both raced and gendered. Turning attention to issues of second-language writers, Paul Kei Matsuda has analyzed issues of labor that divide composition and ESL classrooms and pedagogies. More recently, Jennifer Clary-Lemon’s “The Rhetoric of Race and the Racialization of Composition Studies” examines the notion of *race* in composition studies during the past two decades, problematizing any unitary sense of the term in contemporary rhetoric and composition scholarship, revealing the relations of history, power, and language at work. Scott Lyons’s research analyzes the rhetorical construction of identity and nation for Native Americans, considering, in part, the role of naming and labeling. This brief literature review is only a fraction of such scholarship, revealing a nexus of interest in issues of inequality that establish a clear link between rhetoric and composition and CDA.

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### ***Ethics***

Another point of overlap between CDA and rhetoric/composition is concerned with civic engagement and the ethical uses of language, utilizing CDA to reveal specific ways in which language use reflects power inequalities. Thomas Huckin (“Critical”), for instance, inspired by education researcher Sandra Stotsky’s assignment in which students wrote letters to their legislators, analyzed a form letter from one of his legislators in response to his own letter about the state’s funding of higher education. By using a variety of discourse-analytic and rhetorical concepts (genre, textual silences, interdiscursivity, insinuation, pronoun use, face work, relevance theory), he exposes a fundamental incoherence and a condescending, nondemocratic stance in the legislator’s letter. In a different vein, linguist Ellen Barton conducted a fine-grained study of recruitment pitches for two medical experiments, showing how the recruiters’ use of linguistic reformulation played a powerful role in persuading participants to

“volunteer” their time and their blood samples. Her CDA-style study is relevant to writing studies in at least two ways. First, as Barton notes, “The fundamental insight that composition/rhetoric offers to the literature on ethics and bioethics is that decision-making with ethical dimensions is most often interactional and therefore rhetorical” (599). Second, it offers a cautionary note for writing researchers, illustrating how they can unwittingly manipulate their student subjects through a seemingly innocent choice of words.

### **Higher Education**

CDA concepts and principles have also proved valuable in examining ways in which power is constructed rhetorically in educational settings. Fairclough has written extensively about the ‘commodification’ of higher education in Britain (141–45), and more recently CDA scholars in North America have taken up the topic as well. Educational policy researcher Eric Haas and education scholar Gustavo Fischman, for example, created a large corpus of texts (3,894 editorials on higher education published during the past twenty-five years) to analyze

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the decision-making processes in higher education management. They combined CDA with Eleanor Rosch’s and George Lakoff’s theories to reveal three predominant kinds of educational discourse prototypes. Education scholar David Ayers

takes a more local view, analyzing 178 texts published on budget websites at three state universities. Through intertextual and interdiscursive analysis, he shows how the chancellors at these universities amalgamated different genres to create new managerial forms of legitimation and thus rationalize budget cuts. Rhetoric and composition scholar Pegeen Reichert Powell has analyzed the concept of retention in higher education as it was linguistically represented in two self-studies at her university ten years apart. She argues that increased use of the nominal form *retention* mirrors the increasing corporatization of higher education whereby universities, instead of *studying* themselves, are *promoting* themselves and their managerial objectives (“*Retention*”).

### **Critical Pedagogy**

CDA offers a methodology for examining not just the discourse of educational institutions but also that of the classroom itself, making it useful to scholars and practitioners of critical pedagogy. One central tenet of critical pedagogy is that the classroom is a place in which power is circulated, managed, exploited,



resisted, and often directly impacted by institutional policies and changes. In Powell's words, CDA can "complement and extend existing critical and radical writing pedagogies" (*Retention* 439). This is reflected in another study by Powell, which used CDA to analyze the ways in which campus politics manifest in and impact first-year writing programs. As Powell suggests, first-year writing is politicized because it is often a "locus for anxiety over standards in higher education" (*Critical* 440), especially when the university is undergoing demographic changes. Also applying CDA in a critical pedagogy study, Margaret Price explains that she "chose discourse analysis as a method because of its ability to uncover micro-shifts in language that signal larger critical shifts" (63). For both Powell and Price, then, CDA provides insight into the ways in which power in the classroom is created and circulated in specific instances of discourse.

CDA can also be of service in assessing critical pedagogy's efficacy. Linguist Patricia Mayes, for example, analyzed power relations in two sections of a US composition course that were following a critical pedagogy curriculum. By focusing on micro-level interactions between the instructors and their students, paying special attention to the use of directives, hedges, and modal verbs, she shows that writing instructors can be caught in an "ideological dilemma" that undermines their goal of creating a liberatory classroom. Her study echoes the findings of an earlier study by rhet/comp scholars Mary J. Fuller and Jean Ann Lutz, who conducted a multimodal, qualitative analysis of their self-positioning as two women professors in a predominantly androcentric teaching situation. Fuller and Lutz analyzed student interviews and their own syllabi, paying attention to the use of modal verbs (e.g., *will*, *must*), forms of address, and appeals to authority. They discovered, as did Mayes, that their commitment to an egalitarian pedagogy was undermined by institutional realities, concluding that their "desire to relinquish or share our power" was mitigated by standards and pressures of the university structure (Fuller and Lutz 371).

### **News Media**

Another convergence of interests between composition/rhetoric and CDA can be found in the analysis of news coverage. Just as rhetoric going back to antiquity has concerned itself with the events of the day, modern-day composition classes routinely have students read and write about important current events. With its attention to both textual detail and sociopolitical context, CDA is especially well suited to help instructors and students conduct insightful critiques of how such events are depicted in the media. We see this well developed, for example, in rhetoric scholar Craig O. Stewart's analysis of a set of news texts and press

releases about “reparative therapy” for homosexuality. By using the CDA concepts of framing and “micro-rhetorical” choices (Johnstone and Eisenhart 8), Stewart shows how scientific claims can be manipulated in the news media, affecting how lay audiences (including students) interpret those claims. In a similar demonstration of how discursive framing can affect the interpretation of journalistic texts, Thomas Huckin used a corpus of 163 news articles to analyze an editorial and a feature story about homelessness, showing how contrasting patterns of what he calls “textual silences” promoted contrasting ideological frames (see “Textual”). Similarly, ESL specialist Lynne Diaz-Rico used various CDA tools to examine a large corpus of news stories published in the *LA Times* about Arizona’s widely publicized 2010 law about Mexican immigration. Adhering to Fairclough’s model, her analysis analyzes topic selection, foregrounding, backgrounding, stereotyping, and use of keywords.

### ***Institutional Practices***

Composition and rhetoric scholars interested in institutional discursive practices also apply CDA concepts and methods. For example, Patricia Dunmire analyzes the rhetoric deployed in national security policies that works to legitimate future political action. Also interested in government documents, Christopher Eisenhart analyzes governmental accounts of the FBI’s involvement in the Waco disaster, showing how they controlled the public response to the event and to the government’s involvement in it. CDA is also well used in legal analysis. Gail Stygall has used CDA to analyze civil trial discourses to understand the ways turgid legal language excludes lay communities and ultimately to show that “legal language is a socially constructed institution in its own right” (4). In “A Legal Discourse of Transparency,” Jennifer Andrus interrogates the legal presumption of linguistic transparency to show that it negatively affects the victims of intimate violence by appropriating their speech for legal purposes. Health care is taken up in Ellen Barton and Susan Eggly’s study of informed consent, which argues that in discussions about clinical trials the line between care and research is blurred.

Still another point of overlap between CDA and rhetoric and composition is conceptual. Some scholars borrow, not methodologically, but in order to stretch or problematize a concept in one or the other field. For example, technical communication and rhetoric scholar Sean Zdenek uses CDA to comment on and modify rhetorical approaches to agency within the Deaf community, while Peter Cramer uses rhetorical theory to problematize the notion of event

in CDA. Paul Prior and Julia A. Hengst call attention to the potential of semiotic theory and CDA to be used together to understand mediated discourse as a social and semiotic practice, including speech, gesture, text, movement, intonation, and media. In *Everyday Talk*, communication scholar Karen Tracy demonstrates the ways CDA can be used to work with a large corpus of spoken data to understand identity as it is enacted, managed, responded to, and negotiated in a number of everyday situations in which power dynamics are more or less in play.

As the research discussed above shows, in current trends in rhetoric and composition scholarship, we are seeing changes in the types of text and contexts being studied that require new methods of data collection and analysis. It is increasingly common in writing studies to study a large corpus of texts and to use ethnography to study a community and the texts circulated or circulating in that community, rather than a static text or an isolated community. This shift to more complex contexts comes with a few complications, one of which is how to manage a large and heterogeneous data set that includes speech and text. CDA provides resources for dealing with the complications that arise when working with unplanned speech. Bringing together rhetoric and composition and CDA allows scholars to analyze new and expanding contexts and texts, while paying attention to the ways in which structures of power that are hypostatized and circulated in everyday texts and discourses are manipulated or used to manipulate.

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### **The Value Added: Future Collaborations between Rhetoric and Composition and CDA**

Over the last few years, rhetoric and composition researchers have shown increased interest in new methods, both quantitative and qualitative, many of which promote research that is multimodal and can cope with archival data as well as ethnographically collected spoken data. This means that writing studies scholars are working transdisciplinarily, moving away from study of elite discourse toward the non-elite discourses of students, and sometimes with large corpuses of text that might span hundreds of years. Accordingly, we need to be able to parse and theorize the shifts in texts across periods and contexts, the rhetorical function of power, and the performance of identities. Added to this

are increasing calls for rigorous methods that are grounded in empirical data without becoming positivistic (see Bazerman and Prior). CDA uses rigorous, empirical methods that are sensitive to both context and theory, making it ideal for the demands of a range of projects being developed in our field. CDA “look[s] systematically at one or more of the often unnoticed details of grammar and word choice” (Zdenek and Johnstone 25). The systematicity of CDA keeps analysis close to the linguistic data under analysis, looking for patterns at the stylistic, verbal, syntactic, and figurative structure and considering the ways in which such discursive and semiotic structures circulate or articulate with ideology. Because it (also) takes the ideological aspect of discourse as a given, importing CDA into a rhetorical framework leads to robust theorizing of aspects of the rhetorical processes in which we are deeply invested:

- textual effects such as persuasion, the performance of *ethos*
- the reinterpretation of *topoi* in new contexts
- the interplay between university politics and first-year writing programs
- the performance of power in the classroom
- the rhetorical functions of institutions such as medicine and the law, and the like.

In what follows, we detail the ways in which CDA offers specific practical and theoretical benefits to rhetoric/composition research in terms of method and data analysis, considerations of intertextuality, and multimodality.

### ***Benefits of CDA Research Methods***

Archival research has long been a staple method for research in rhetoric and composition (see, for example, Ramsey et al.; Sharer; Kirsch and Rohan; Enoch). Likewise, the rich descriptions of context and interaction produced with ethnographic methods, such as fieldwork, observation and participant-observation, and interviews (see Bishop; Heath and Street), have led to a range of projects in rhetoric and composition (see Brown and Dobrin; Vincent, Kirklighter, and Moxley).

Archival research produces a significant amount of textual data, and thus is ripe for CDA methods. For example, the discourse-historical CDA approach was developed specifically to work with archival data in multiple modalities and genres across time, including news media, museum exhibits, television programs, letters, textbooks, and other genres (see Martin and Wodak). In

“We’re Not Ethnic, We’re Irish!” writing studies scholar Jennifer Clary-Lemon uses this method to analyze a corpus of oral history transcripts in terms of the discursive construction of immigrant identity and has since used the corpus as a springboard into corroborative archival research of newspaper articles, advertisements, government documents, and political speeches. CDA’s discourse-historical approach allowed her to work with a number of different kinds of texts across time, enabling a critical view of how the texts fit into a larger contextual setting. Specifically, she was able to look at each genre set first for narrative themes, then for strategic ways these texts engaged these themes, and finally for the ways in which these strategies were realized in the language used in each text. (For a detailed how-to of this approach, see Wodak et al. 30–42.) She was also able to look at the ways historical media of the time period studied (the 1960s and 1970s) complexly enabled and constrained latter self-reflection about emigration in the present day.

Both archival and ethnographic methods produce a significant amount of multimodal data that has to be organized, transcribed, coded, and analyzed. A classroom ethnography project might include more than a hundred hours of recorded interviews with students and teachers; page upon page of classroom observation notes that discuss the teachers’ diction, gestures, and movement in the classroom, the students’ posture and facial expressions; recorded online interactions in an online educational environment; hundreds of pages of papers with teachers’ comments; the teachers’ classroom instructions and their on-line learning modules; and university guidelines and retention documents. One potential use of CDA is the analysis

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of a large textual corpus, as it can be used to comb through long stretches of discourse (text, talk, image, and gesture) to find patterns that create, circulate, reinforce, and reflect societal norms and ideology. A hypothetical research example demonstrates what using CDA to analyze classroom ethnography might look like.

In our hypothetical study, we are trying to understand why some of our students aren’t participating in classroom discussion. Even though it is clear from their papers that they understand and are engaged in the material, some of the female students at a university with a large commuter population don’t participate in classroom discussions, and we want to figure out why.

Classroom ethnography and CDA combined facilitate the structured collection and analysis of such data, fostering the analysis of individual discursive strategies and insight into the differing views of the power structures within the classroom—for example, between students and between students and the teacher—by analyzing discursive interactions. In this study, one potential finding is that female students from rural areas express more discomfort with talking in class than students who grew up in the same city as the university. This group of students may also use more modal verbs and hedges, such as, “I’m getting an A in my biology class. Or at least I *might*,” when they speak in class. They may also speak with a dialect associated with a rural area—for example, using double modals: “If I don’t go home for Thanksgiving, I *might could* get a good grade on that paper.” Close attention to the details of discourse give an insight into these structures and the ways students use them to orient to each other, the class, and the university. Because CDA also considers the role of social context—issues of place, class, gender, and policy, for starters—to understand the ways students are orienting to the institution and to other students, we may indeed find that class is an issue, but that this particular group discusses class in terms of place, rural/urban, rather than socioeconomic status. This in turn would lead us to investigate those ideological aspects of place that might bear on personal and group identity, such as class, cultural practices, religious affiliation, and educational system.

### ***Intertextuality and Recontextualization***

With its keenness for working with archival data and explicit attention to the relationship between texts and contexts, CDA facilitates research that analyzes discursive mechanisms as they have been developed over a stretch of many years, a text that has been moved between cultural sites and discourses, and a text that has been moved across time periods (see Andrus; Blommaert; Ehrlich; Hodges). The availability of digital archives such as LexisNexis and public and academic requests for more transparency in government mean that there is access to many kinds of documents (newspaper, legal precedent, congressional hearings, and the like) stretching back hundreds of years. The rhetoric of this kind of public discourse is ripe for a CDA-style analysis. Intertextual analysis looks for the ways old texts affect new contexts, the ways contexts alter the rhetorical force of a text, the way a text can accrete contextuality, and the way a text can reconfigure a context (Fairclough; van Leeuwen). Similarly, in rhetoric and composition, intertextuality has been fruitfully used to understand

relationships between texts, which according to Bazerman, is essential for understanding writing and writing instruction (see “Intertextuality”).

Like intertextuality, recontextualization looks for and interrogates “chains of events and texts” (Fairclough 420) that might span a few weeks of news coverage, a year’s worth of ethnographic data, or a few hundred years of legal precedent. Recontextualization not only looks for and analyzes texts embedded in other texts, but it also considers the ways in which “discursive practices are cut off from their embeddedness in action and transformed into discourses which are articulated together in new ways according to the logic of the recontextualising practice; and transformed from real to imaginary, and brought into the space of ideology” (Fairclough 399). In other words, recontextualization looks for the ways in which a text is transformed, reimaged, and even disfigured when it is brought into a new context.

### **Multimodality**

CDA has been criticized for being too language centered (Blommaert). However, this is changing as more and more CDA scholars broaden their interests to include multimodal communication like scholars in related fields—composition/rhetoric, communication, education, cultural studies—are doing. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, two founders of CDA, have been leading the way in this effort. Both Kress and van Leeuwen bring with them a critical lens, sensitive to the dimensions and effects of ideology and manipulation in visual composition. “Images,” argues van Leeuwen, “provide interpretations, ideologically-colored angles” that work by “suggestion” and “connotation” (136). Thus images that combine multiple modes of communication are not only available for analysis but also, from a CDA perspective, crucially need analysis to understand the role they play in rhetorical manipulation. Some scholars, such as David Machin and Norman Fairclough are following Kress’s and van Leeuwen’s lead, replacing “discourse” with *semiosis* (69), which doesn’t constrain meaning making to written modalities. An excessive focus on language also draws attention away from textual silences, omissions, and absences, which have enormously manipulative potential (Huckin, “Textual,” “On Textual”; O’Halloran). CDA increasingly takes such silences into account.

Like visual rhetoric and very often overlapping with it, research in digital literacies and digital rhetoric has long had an interest in the ethical and critical

**Thus images that combine multiple modes of communication are not only available for analysis but also, from a CDA perspective, crucially need analysis to understand the role they play in rhetorical manipulation.**

dimensions of text, writing processes, and pedagogical choices. “The values embedded in our composing have consequences for us and others,” writes Anne Frances Wysocki (285), and thus we should be guided by ethics, “what we are to value” and “how then we are to act” (282), when we teach composition in new and emerging media environments. Because authority and ideology are embedded in text and modes of composing, we must consider the ways in which others will be impacted by discourse practices. Research into recent and emerging semiotic practice, then, looks toward more ethical uses of language by being aware of semiotic power. An early example of this is Cynthia and Richard J. Selfe’s “The Politics of the Interface: Power and Its Exercise in Electronic Contact Zones,” in which the authors posit undemocratic political and ideological effects of the computers used in composition classes. Noting terms such as “folders,” “files,” and “desktop” for various screen icons and the use of standard English as the default language, they critique computer interfaces as “maps of discursive privilege” for a world “constituted around the lives and values of white, male, middle- and upper-class professionals” (487). Also doing multimodal research in rhetoric/composition, Glynda A. Hull and Mark Evan Nelson call for more empirical research. CDA provides a method that follows Wysocki’s admonition to foreground “ethical composition practices,” the Selfes’ advocacy of critical awareness, and Hull and Nelson’s request for empirical analysis. In many ways, the composition classroom ethnography described above is multimodal, bringing together face-to-face interaction, writing and speech, online content, and so forth.

The switch to data that is visual and design rich requires a new descriptive vocabulary. Rather than concerning itself with text or at least text alone, this research analyzes the messages that are enabled by particular types of media and modes of representation. For Kress, media make particular design strategies “available” for reuse in the same media or other media. Research using this model is currently exploding, ranging from analysis of the ways in which new technologies alter messages and the ways we receive them to the ways that media and messages are remediated, integrated into another media, to create a multifaceted rhetorical message that is effectual because of both the design and the message. As an arm of CDA, this research is concerned with the details, which in this case are the visible details of image, design and word, and the ideological context in which they are deployed and read. With a multimodal analysis, we wouldn’t stop at an analysis of the single visual but would look at the ways in which it is imported into and taken up in other media. Thus, the



concepts of intertextuality and recontextualization remain important in visual analysis, working in the form of remediation. Prior and Hengst remind us that we need to go beyond simply looking at multimodal objects and instead analyze multimodality as a “situated activity” (6). This puts the attention on discursive practices and the ideological discourses that give shape to remediated objects.

## **Conclusion**

In the past two decades, critical discourse analysis has become an important new research methodology in a variety of disciplines around the world. We believe that it has much to offer rhetoric/composition, and that rhet/comp, in turn, has much to offer the further development of CDA. Indeed, as we have shown here, a number of rhet/comp scholars are already using CDA concepts and methods in their work.

CDA brings to rhetoric and composition a number of important methodological features. First and foremost is the importance of grounding a broad contextual perspective in detailed textual analysis. Although rhet/comp also takes into account this macro/micro dualism, it doesn't always do so systematically or rigorously. Second, a defining feature of CDA is its concern with issues of social justice and the abuse of power. Indeed, CDA scholarship typically consists of theorizing and documenting such abuses, framed by a democratic code of ethics. Although such a concern for the political and ethical exists as well in rhet/comp (for example, in critical pedagogy), it is not a defining feature of the field and therefore does not have readily available frameworks for exposition to the degree that CDA does. Third, because power abuse is most often centered in institutions, CDA routinely engages in institutional analysis—especially, powerful institutions such as government, education, the law, or the mainstream news media. Although rhet/comp has long studied its own discipline, it tends to focus more on individual students or classrooms than on powerful institutions. The studies of higher education described above (by Powell, Ayers, Haas and Fischman, and others) illustrate how CDA can be used to extend writing studies' scope to include broader institutional analysis. Finally, CDA brings coherence to a study with multiple texts in multiple modes (written, spoken, visual), thus making itself especially valuable for archival historical research and for contemporary pedagogical research. In addition to such broad features, CDA makes available a number of text-analytic concepts that can be usefully deployed in comp/rhet research, such as recontextualization, reformulation, interdiscursivity, textual silences, rich features, foregrounding/backgrounding, synthetic personalization, verb modality, and figured worlds.

But it's not a one-way street. Just as CDA is beginning to influence rhet/comp, we believe rhet/comp has the potential to influence the further development of CDA. As Heidi McKee and James Porter note, "The art of rhetoric by its very nature teaches us the importance of audience and of situational circumstances; the field of composition teaches us to be attentive to individual

**Just as CDA is beginning to influence rhet/comp, we believe rhet/comp has the potential to influence the further development of CDA.**

writers as persons" (713). Just as McKee and Porter use this dual sensibility to guide their study of ethics in digital writing research, we believe it can serve to nourish the field of CDA as well. This will mean, in particular,

not only giving increasing attention to ethical issues, to rhetorical elements (e.g., audience, purpose, medium, context), and to pedagogical settings, but also being more attentive to individuals as persons and more self-reflexive. Indeed, we believe we are already seeing such developments in the studies cited above, marking a distinctively North American style of CDA. Thus, there is a symbiotic relationship between North American CDA and rhet/comp that, with further development, will be of benefit to all.

## **Appendix—For Further Reading**

### ***Schools of Critical Discourse Analysis***

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