

CURRICULUM VITÆ

Dr. James N. Comas

Department of English

Box 70, Middle Tennessee State University

Murfreesboro, TN 37132-0001

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September 2014

EDUCATION

Ph.D. English - University of Southern California, 1987

Major Field: Rhetoric and Composition

Secondary Specializations: Literary Theory, Linguistics, Modernist Poetry

Dissertation: "Toward a Rhetorical Historiography of American Literary Studies"

W. Ross Winterowd, Director (English);

Vincent Farenga (Comparative Literature and Classics)

Max Schultz (English)

M.A. English - University of Southern California, 1981

B.A. English - University of Utah, 1975, *Magna cum laude*

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Associate Professor, Department of English, Middle Tennessee State University

2006-present

Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Missouri

1998-2006

Assistant Director, Soling Program, College of Arts and Sciences, Syracuse University

1997-98

Assistant Professor, Writing Program and Department of English, Syracuse University

1990-97

Faculty Member, College of Liberal Studies, Continuing Education, University of Oklahoma

1989-90

Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Oklahoma

1987-90

Acting Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Oklahoma

1985-86

ACADEMIC SPECIALIZATIONS & LANGUAGES

- History of Rhetoric – ancient, early-modern, 20th-c., philosophy and rhetoric, historiography
- History of Criticism – ancient, 20th-c., criticism and ethics, institutional aspects, historiography
- Classical Greek, Latin, & French (reading knowledge)

PUBLICATIONS

Book

Between Politics and Ethics: Toward a Vocative History of English Studies. Southern Illinois UP (2006).

Articles and Review

"Rhetoric." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*. Ed. Victor E. Taylor and Charles E. Winqvist. London: Routledge, 2001. 341-45.

"Émile Benveniste." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*. Ed. Victor E. Taylor and Charles E. Winqvist. London: Routledge, 2001. 35.

"Ethics, Ethos, Habitation." *Ethical Issues in College Writing*. Ed. Fredric G. Gale, James Kinneavy, and Phillip Sipiora. New York: Peter Lang, 1999. 75-90.

"War and the Anima of Criticism." *Rhetoric Review*, 16 (1998): 188-225.

"Philosophy of Rhetoric." *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*. Ed. Theresa Enos. Garland Press, 1995. 515-18.

Review of *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, ed. R. A. Cherwitz. *College Composition and Communication* 42 (1991): 512-14.

"The Presence of Theory / Theorizing the Present." *Research in African Literatures* (Special issue: Critical Theory and African Literature) 21 (1990): 5-31.

"Kenneth Burke." *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies*, 2nd ed. Ed. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer. New York: Longman, 1988. Republished in *Literary Criticism and Theory: the Greeks to the Present*. Ed. Robert Con Davis and Laurie Finke. New York: Longman, 1989.

"Michel Foucault." *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies*, 2nd ed. Ed. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer. New York: Longman, 1988. Republished in *Literary Criticism and Theory: the Greeks to the Present*. Ed. Robert Con Davis and Laurie Finke. New York: Longman, 1989.

"The Ethics of Publishing." *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 29 (1988): 57-69. Coauthored with Ronald Schleifer.

"The Uses and Functions of Theory: Toward a Rhetorical Historiography of American Literary Studies." *The GRIP Report* 7 (1986).

Work in Progress

Article "The Anxiety of Postwar Cosmopolitanism: World War I and the Reorganization of the MLA" (9510 words). First of a two-part study that chronicles the establishment of *theory* as a key term in American literary studies by tracing its use within organs of the MLA, beginning with the establishment in 1921 of discussion groups that came to define specific areas of study. This part of the study shows that the modern structure of the MLA resulted from (1) a strong sense of intellectual inferiority in the face of the formation of new international societies of learning following World War I and (2) a new organizational sensibility brought by John Manly from his experience of helping to organize and run the military intelligence

unit of the War Department. Status: Revising introduction; submit to *American Literary History* (August 2007).

Article “From ‘Aesthetics’ to ‘Theory’: A Lost Chapter in the History of English Studies” (16,246 words). Second of a two-part study that chronicles the establishment of *theory* as a key term in American literary studies by tracing its use within the MLA discussion groups beginning with their establishment in 1921 until 1948, when “literary theory” replaces “aesthetics” as the philosophical foundation for professional literary studies. Includes chart of all papers delivered at annual MLA within groups devoted to philosophical approaches to literature. Status: Revising first draft; submit to *American Literary History* (December 2007).

Article “Dithyrambic Criticism: The Emergence of Social Commentary in the Early Writings of Kenneth Burke” examines Burke's early social criticism, with primary focus on his influential article “Psychology and Form” (1925). In doing so, it places Burke within a stream of thought I call “anti-modernist rhetoric,” which, beginning with Vico's 1709 defense of rhetorical pedagogy, envisions a rhetorical perspective on language as the basis of opposition to the influence of science on society. The critical writings of Burke's early period (1921-1931) are typically regarded as “aesthetic” in interest and concern. Status: Revising first draft (5031 words); to be submitted to the new *Kenneth Burke Journal*.

Article “Quintilian and the Problem of Translating *Rhêtorikê*” examines Quintilian's criticism of the Latin translations of the Greek *rhêtorikê* and, in the process, explores the possibility of a long-standing misinterpretation of Quintilian by English, Italian, French, and German translators. Status: Drafting from notes; submit to *American Journal of Philology* (January 2007).

Book *Antimodernism and the History of Rhetoric*. Based on the historiography introduced in my “Rhetoric” article for the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*, this study complicates the accepted relationship between rhetoric and postmodern thought by elucidating an “antimodernist” strand of rhetorical theory beginning in the early eighteenth century (Vico) and developing throughout the nineteenth (Nietzsche) and twentieth (Burke) centuries. It then compares this antimodernism in relation to Gianni Vattimo's recent thinking on the relationship of rhetoric and postmodernism. Status: Revising prospectus.

CONFERENCE & WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

“Vico, Quintilian, and the Problem of Translating *Rhêtorikê*,” Biennial Conference of the Rhetoric Society of America, Seattle WA, 25 May 2008.

“Notes on the Future of Rhetoric and the Future of the Humanities,” Rhetoric Society of America Workshop: “Improving the Status of Rhetoric Studies,” Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, June 2007.

“On the Other Side of Politics: Friendship, Criticism, and Academic Freedom in the Early Days of McCarthyism.” Penn State Conference on Rhetoric: Kenneth Burke and His Circles, 2005.

“Revival of Rhetoric / Rhetoric of Revival.” Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), San Antonio, 2004.

“‘Just’ Ethics? Kenneth Burke's Deferral of the Ethical.” CCCC, Phoenix, 1997.

- “At the Limits of ‘The Political’: Rethinking ‘Criticism’ as a Compositionist.” Thomas R. Watson Conference on Rhetoric & Composition, University of Louisville, 1996.
- “Theoretical Imperatives: On the Uses and Functions of ‘Theory’ in American Composition and Literary Studies.” Modern Language Association, New York, 1992.
- “Rhetoric and the Sacred: Moral Concepts in the Cultural Theories of Kenneth Burke and Georges Bataille.” Rhetoric Society of America, Minneapolis, 1992.
- “Establishing a Disciplinary Canon in Composition Studies: Book-Reviewing as a Critical Genre.” CCCC, Cincinnati, 1992.
- “Does the Essay Have a Future: Lyotard and Writing beyond the ‘Differend.’” CCCC, Chicago, 1990.
- Respondent to papers by W. Ross Winterowd and John Warnock, “The Philosophy of Composition.” CCCC, Chicago, 1990.
- “Literacy Beyond Reason: Reading and Writing in the Postmodern Scene.” National Council of Teachers of English, Los Angeles, 1987.
- “‘Absolute Linguistic Skepticism’: The Idea of ‘Critical Literacy’ in the Work of Kenneth Burke, R. P. Blackmur, and Henry Giroux.” Group for Research on the Institutionalization and Professionalization of Literary Studies (GRIP), Carnegie-Mellon University, 1987.
- “The Uses and Functions of Theory: Toward a Rhetorical Historiography of American Literary Studies.” GRIP, Carnegie-Mellon University, 1986. Also published as a working paper in *The GRIP Report* 7, 1986.

IN-HOUSE PUBLICATIONS AND TALKS

- “Michaels's *Shape of the Signifier*: Implications for Composition Studies,” English Department Colloquium, University of Missouri, 2004
- “On the ‘Politics of Composition Studies,’” English Department Colloquium, University of Missouri, 2001.
- “Ethics, Ethos, Habitation,” English Department Colloquium, University of Missouri, 1998.
- Closing Remarks. “Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences: An Interdisciplinary Discussion, with guest Alan Sokal.” Syracuse University, 1996.
- “Does the Essay Have a Future?” *Reflections in Writing* 14 (Fall 1991): 45-55. The Writing Program, Syracuse University.
- “The Force of Rhetorical Theory.” 205 Curriculum Day. Writing Program, Syracuse University, 1990.
- “Rhetoric and Response: Notes in Search of Some Future Discussion.” *Reflections in Writing* 12 (Summer 1990): 10-12. The Writing Program, Syracuse University.
- “The Problems of ‘Epistemological Pedagogy’?” Fall Teaching Conference of The Writing Program, Syracuse University, 1990.

ONLINE RESOURCES

“Medieval Arabic-Islamic Rhetoric and Poetics: Selected Bibliography of Work in English”
<http://www.mtsu.edu/~jcomas/rhetoric/arabic.html>

“The Question of Defining ‘Rhetoric’”
<http://www.mtsu.edu/~jcomas/rhetoric/defining.html>

“Rhetoric - An Etymology”
<http://www.mtsu.edu/~jcomas/rhetoric/etymology.html>

“Bibliographies in the Study of Rhetoric”
<http://www.mtsu.edu/~jcomas/rhetoric/bibliographies.html>

“Ancient Rhetoric - Bibliographies and Other Resources”
<http://www.mtsu.edu/~jcomas/rhetoric/ancient.html>

“Aristotle - Rhetoric and Dialectical Reasoning”
<http://www.mtsu.edu/~jcomas/aristotle/dialectic.html>

“Resources for the Study of Kenneth Burke”
<http://www.mtsu.edu/~jcomas/burke/>

“Vico and Rhetoric - A Bibliography”
<http://www.mtsu.edu/~jcomas/vico/bibliography.html>

“Resources for the Study of Georges Bataille”
<http://www.mtsu.edu/~jcomas/bataille/>

TEACHING

Middle Tennessee State University (2006-present)

Graduate Courses

ENGL 6/7505 - History of Rhetoric: Ancient to Renaissance
ENGL 6/7510 - History of Rhetoric: Early-Modern to Contemporary
ENGL 7620 - Directed Research: History of American Composition Studies, 1970-90

Undergraduate Courses

ENGL 1010 - Expository Writing
ENGL 1020 - Research and Argumentative Writing
ENGL 3000 - Introduction to Literary Studies
ENGL 3605 - Applied Writing
ENGL 4410 - Literary Criticism
ENGL 4670 - The Study of Rhetoric

Graduate Dissertations, Theses, and Examinations

PhD Dissertation, Reader

1. Wilson W. Onstott, “Reconsidering Paul Scott’s *The Raj Quartet*: History, Genre and Criticism” (May 2014)

MA Thesis, Director

1. Katherine Brewer, “Hannah Arendt and the Rhetorical Tradition: The Placement of Rhetoric in Contemporary Political Theory” (expected May 2015)

MA Thesis, Reader

1. Maximilian Ofori, "The Use of the English Language in Socio-Religious Contexts in Accra, Ghana" (Mar 2010)
2. Christopher Walker, "Censorship and the Principle of Charity: Judge John M. Woolsey's Reading of James Joyce in *United States v. One Book Called 'Ulysses'*" (Oct 2010)
3. Suzanne Messer, "In Defense of Booker T. Washington: A Study in Meta-Criticism" (Jun 2011)
4. Will Ramsay, "Ben Jonson and the Philosophical Tradition of Friendship" (expected Dec 2014)

PhD preliminary examinations in Composition-Rhetoric (10) and Criticism & Critical Theory (6)

University of Missouri-Columbia (1998-2006)

Graduate Courses

ENG 8070 - History of Criticism (05W)
ENG 4050 - Introduction to the Study of Rhetoric (04F)
ENG 462 - Ancient Rhetoric and Its (Post)modern Reception (01W)
ENG 437 - Studies in Criticism & Theory - Rhetoric and the Sacred: Bataille & Burke (00W)
ENG 460 - Theory and Practice of Composition (99W, 02F, 04W, 05F)

Undergraduate Courses

ENG 360 - Introduction to the Study of Rhetoric (98F, 99F, 01F)
ENG 339 - History of Criticism (00F)
ENG 205 - Introduction to Literary Studies (99F, 00Sum, 00F, 01Sum, 02F, 05F)
ENG 20 - Exposition and Argumentation (98F, 02F)
HON 103GH - The Early Modern World (02F, 04F)
HON 104GH - The Modern Era (03W, 05W)

Graduate Dissertations, Theses, and Examinations (service on a total of 11 Ph.D. and M.A. committees; director of 1 completed Ph.D. dissertation)

PhD Dissertation, Director

Deborah Forssman-Hill. "Crossing the Lines in Academic Discourse: The Transforming and Transformative Voices of Three Women in Composition Studies" (May 2004)

PhD Dissertation, Reader

Kevin Stein (Communications), "Katêgoria, Apologia, and Antapologia in the 1960 and 2001 Spy Plane Incidents" (September 2005)

Tim Spence, "Affective Rhetoric: Emotional Persuasion and the Social Influence of Prayer in Fourteenth-Century England" (July 2003)

David Airne (Communications), "Issues and Images: Gender Construction in Local Political Advertisements" (Prospectus defended Mar 2005)

PhD Exam Committee, Chair

Deborah Forssman (1999)

PhD Exam Committee, Member

David Airne (Communications, 2001-02)

Julie Berman (Communications, 1999)

MA Thesis, Director

Jennifer Morgan, "Notions of Ownership and the Collaborative Writing Program: A Review and Observation" (2000)

MA Exam Committee

Keith Gibson (1999)

Katie Kielpinski (2002)

Undergraduate Honors Thesis

Director

Samara Landers (2000)

Syracuse University (1990-1998)

Graduate Courses

ENG 700 - Seminar: Theoretical Communities: American Literary Criticism, 1921-1984

WRT 631 - 20th-Century Rhetorical Studies

ENG 615 - Contemporary Rhetoric: Theory and Practice

ENG 600 - Independent Study

Undergraduate Courses

WRT/ETS 400/463 - Studies in Discourse Analysis: Introduction to Rhetorical Theory

WRT 305 - Argumentation in Public-Policy Discourse and Academic Prose

WRT 205 - Writing Studio 2

University of Oklahoma, Department of English (1985-1990)

Graduate Classes

ENG 6103 - Seminar: Introduction to the Study of Composition/Rhetoric/Literacy

ENG 6013 - Seminar: Special Topics in Rhetorical Theory—Contemporary Rhetorical Theory

ENG 6013 - Seminar: Special Topics in Rhetorical Theory—Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Rhetorical Theory

ENG 5303 - Seminar: History of Criticism to 1800

ENG 5003 - Advanced Literary Analysis

Undergraduate Classes

ENG 4653 Twentieth-Century English Poetry

ENG 3313 Introduction to Literary Theory

ENG 3103 Advanced Composition: Argumentation

ENG 2313 Introduction to Critical Reading and Writing

ENG 2223 Introduction to Poetry

ENG 1413 Principles of Composition (Honors program)

ENG 1213 Principles of Composition

University of Oklahoma, College of Liberal Studies

Cultural Theory and Popular Culture. Graduate seminar for the Masters in Liberal Studies Program, January 1989. Co-taught with Paul Gilje, Professor of History.

Myth and Contemporary Perceptions of Crisis. Graduate seminar for the Masters in Liberal Studies Program, June 1990. Co-taught with Marvin Baker, Professor of Geography, and James Estes, Professor of Biology.

SERVICE

Professional

Referee for *PMLA* (2007)
Referee for *Composition Studies* (2007-present)
Referee for *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* (2000-2005)
Referee for *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* (2004)
Referee for *College Composition and Communication* (1991-94)
Contributing Editor for *The Writing Instructor* (1994-2000)
Referee for Routledge Press (2005-present)
Referee for Allyn & Bacon/Longman (2005)
Referee for the University of Arizona Press
Referee for the University of Oklahoma Press

Middle Tennessee State University (2006-Present)

University

University Disciplinary Committee, 2014-16
Instructional Evaluation and Development Committee, 2011-13
Curriculum Committee, 2009-11

Department Committees

Advisory Committee, 2009-10; 2012-13 (chair)
Department Chair Search Committee, 2013-14
Graduate Committee, 2007-10
Graduate Program Review Committee, 2007-08
Writing Committee, 2006-07; 2010-11

Department – Other Service

University Writing Center's Shadow Program (semester-long mentoring; Mick Howard, Spr. 2011)
Panel Chair, EGSO Re-Visioning Conference (21 Apr 2007)

University of Missouri (1998-2006)

University / College

University - Campus Writing Program Board, 2001-04
University - Student Fee Capital Improvements Committee, 1999-2000
College of Arts and Science - Committee on Curriculum, Instruction, & Advising, 1999-2002

Department

Composition Committee, 1998-2006
Graduate Studies Committee, 1999-2006; Awards Subcommittee, 2000-2006
Undergraduate Studies Committee, 2001-02
Computer Committee, 1999-2001, 2004
Honors Committee, 2000-02

Library Committee, 2000
Rhet/Comp Search Committee, 1998-99

Syracuse University (1990-1998)

University / College

Forum co-organizer (with Dr. Peter Saulson, Dept. of Physics): “Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences: An Interdisciplinary Discussion, with guest Alan Sokal,” Nov. 8, 1996.

College of Arts and Sciences Committee on Instruction, 1991-93. Chair of subcommittee that administered the selection of the Wasserstrom Award for Graduate Teaching, Spring 1993.

College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee, 1994-97.

Department (Writing Program)

Coordinator of MA and PhD concentration in “Composition and Cultural Rhetoric,” 1990-95. Advised students, tracked their progress, coordinated approval process of PhD exam proposals, and corresponded with interested students.

Faculty coordinator of Fall Teachers' Conference, November 1990 & November 1991. Supervised a one-day conference on the teaching of the Program's sophomore-level writing class.

Junior-Faculty Search Committee, 1990-91.

Mini-studio leader, Summer Teachers' Conference, August 1991. Group leader of a one-week orientation for new teaching assistants.

United Way representative, Fall 1991.

Faculty adviser to 205 curriculum group, 1991-92. Organized bi-weekly discussions of pedagogy in the sophomore-level writing course. These discussions resulted in the presentation of papers at the Program's annual spring teaching conference.

Faculty representative on PWI Evaluation Panel, Spring 1992. Reviewed teacher-initiated petitions for promotion from the Program's Professional Writing Instructors.

Faculty adviser to NEXUS curriculum group, 1992-93. Organized bi-weekly discussions of the relationship between the sophomore-level writing course and the upper-division courses. These discussions resulted in the presentation of papers at the Program's annual spring teaching conference.

Consulting editor for “Windows on the Writing Program: The Syracuse Self-Study Portfolio,” Spring 1992. Edited papers written in preparation for an external review of the Writing Program.

Faculty Teaching Mentor in the “Future Professoriate Project,” 1992-93 & 1994-95.

Mentored two graduate students in this Graduate School project. With one student, mentoring took place alongside co-teaching an upper-division writing course. With the other, mentoring took place in weekly meetings.

Graduate program planning, 1993-present. Weekly meetings with two other faculty from the Writing Program to complete development of proposal for new PhD program in “Composition and Cultural Rhetoric” (CCR) and to draft a transition program for CCR within the English department. My individual responsibilities were (a) drafting a description of one of three basic tracks along with its required courses (b) determining the

number of courses that the faculty could actually offer under different configurations of the program curriculum, and (c) to consult university officials on the process of proposing a new graduate program.

Department (English)

Graduate Committee, 1991-92

Executive Committee, 1992-93

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

AAUP

International Society for the History of Rhetoric

Modern Language Association

National Council of Teachers of English

Rhetoric Society of America

SCHOLARLY SOCIETIES

Phi Beta Phi