

PERSPECTIVES

on Contemporary Issues

Readings Across the Disciplines

FOURTH
EDITION

KATHERINE ANNE ACKLEY



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Readings Across the Disciplines

FOURTH EDITION

Katherine Anne Ackley
University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point

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Perspectives on Contemporary Issues: Readings Across the Disciplines,
Fourth Edition

Katherine Anne Ackley

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Permissions Editor: Bob Kauser
Production Services and Text Design:
Hearthside Publishing Services
Photo Manager: Sheri Blaney
Photo Researcher: Jill Engebretson
Cover Designer: Gina Petti
Compositor: ATLAS Graphics & Design
Printer: Malloy Incorporated
Cover Art: Photo of India. © Yann
Arthus-Bertrand/Altitute

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Printed in the United States of America
2 3 4 5 6 7 09 08 07 06 05

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2005920368
Student Edition: ISBN 1-4130-1068-7
Instructor's Edition: ISBN 1-4130-1854-8

Credits appear on pages 750–755, which constitute a
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PREFACE

Perspectives on Contemporary Issues: Readings Across the Disciplines, Fourth Edition, presents an approach to thinking, reading, and writing that views learning as the interconnectedness of ideas and disciplinary perspectives. Contemporary issues engage the students, while the readings provide rich material for both class discussion and writing topics. The essays focus on individual, national, and global issues by authors from a variety of disciplines and professions. Likewise, the writing assignments enhance the skills that students will use, regardless of their majors.

The goals of *Perspectives on Contemporary Issues: Readings Across the Disciplines* are

- to sharpen students' thinking skills by presenting them with a variety of perspectives on current issues;
- to give students practice in both oral and verbal expression, by providing questions for discussion and writing after each selection;
- to provide students with a variety of writing assignments representing the kinds of writing they will be asked to do in courses across the curriculum; and
- to encourage students to view issues and ideas in terms of connections with other people, other disciplines, or other contexts.

The questions for discussion and writing encourage critical thinking by asking students to go well beyond simple recall of the readings and to use higher-order skills such as integration, synthesis, or analysis of what they have read. Most of the questions are suitable for work in small groups, as well as for class discussion.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

New Chapters

There are three new chapters in this edition:

Chapter 4: Writing an Argument. Because so many of the suggestions for writing that accompany the readings ask students to argue, a separate chapter provides detailed guidelines on argumentation as well as sample student and professional papers.

This new chapter represents a significant expansion of discussion of argumentation than in previous editions of the book.

Chapter 17: *America Abroad in Political Science.* This new chapter contains readings reflecting or commenting on the perception from abroad of America in a political context.

Chapter 25: *The Economic Impact of Outsourcing.* The chapter called “The American Image Abroad” in previous editions has been replaced with a new chapter more directly related to business and economics. This new chapter, “The Economic Impact of Outsourcing,” has readings on the effects of outsourcing, both positive and negative.

Photos/Graphics

Responding to Visuals. Each chapter in Parts Two to Five concludes with a new section entitled ***Responding to Visuals***, which features two photographs or images related to the theme of the chapter. The images are accompanied by questions for discussion or suggestions for writing. Because of this new feature, Chapter 1, “Reading Critically,” includes a lengthy section on the rhetorical analysis of visuals.

E-Readings Online. Readings available in InfoTrac® College Edition, the Internet database that Thomson Wadsworth sponsors, are listed in a new section at the end of each major part in Parts Two to Five. For each chapter in the part, students are directed to three or four articles in the database, all on a single topic related to that chapter. Each cluster of readings is followed by questions for discussion and suggested writing topics.

New Readings. There are 45 new readings, almost all of them published in the early 2000s. Many of the older readings from the third edition have been dropped. Among the new readings are essays that focus on topics of recent interest, such as the death penalty, terrorism and war, bioethical issues, and globalization. In addition, the classic essay “A Modest Proposal” by Jonathan Swift is included in the chapter on poverty and homelessness. A couple of chapters from the previous edition, “Terrorism and War” (chapter 16) and “Digital Technology and the Internet” (chapter 18, previously called “Computers and Cyberspace”), have been updated with all new readings.

Expanded Discussion of Evaluating Internet Sources. This edition includes more discussion of and guidelines for evaluating Internet sources. Listservs and blogs are included in this expanded section (see chapter 1).

READING SELECTIONS

The reading selections are divided into four sections within the book, representing four broad disciplinary areas: the arts and media studies, the social sciences, the

natural sciences, and business and economics. Within each broad division are chapters on specific topics related to the larger subject. Part Two, The Arts, Media Studies, and Popular Culture, contains chapters with readings on music and video games, media violence, advertising, Hollywood films, television, and the visual arts. In Part Three, Social and Behavioral Sciences, the chapters address such matters as education, poverty and homelessness, criminal behavior, gender and sex roles, race and ethnicity, terrorism, and war. In Part Four, Science and Technology, writers from a variety of disciplines explore such subjects as the relationships among science, technology, and society; public-health issues; computers and digital technology; the ethical implications of technology and human genetic experimentation; and science and the imagination. Finally, in Part Five, Business and Economics, the essays address marketing and the American consumer, the work place, the economic impact of outsourcing, and the United States in the global marketplace.

The selections in each chapter encourage students to consider issues from different perspectives because their authors come from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds and training. Sometimes the writers cross disciplinary lines in their essays. For example, a chemist explores the metaphor of discovery, and a historian extols the virtues of reading. The individual perspectives of the writers may differ markedly from students' own perspectives, thus generating discussion and writing topics.

ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Following each selection, students have an opportunity to make a *Personal Response* to some aspect of the reading. Each reading is also followed by several *Questions for Class or Small-Group Discussion*. These questions invite students to consider rhetorical strategies of the piece, to think of larger implications, to discuss related issues, or to make connections between the readings and their own experiences. Many of these questions are appropriate for writing topics as well, and many others will prompt students to discover related topics on which to write.

The selections in each chapter are followed by a section called *Perspectives on . . .*, which provides writing topics based on ideas generated by the collected readings in that chapter. These writing assignments are arranged in two categories:

- *Suggested Writing Topics* suitable for synthesis, argumentation, and other modes of writing such as the report, the letter, the personal essay, and the comparison and contrast essay; and
- *Research Topics* suitable for development into research papers.

Finally (as mentioned previously), each chapter in Parts Two through Five concludes with a new section, *Responding to Visuals*, which features two photographs or other visual images. These images relate to the thematic focus of the chapter and are accompanied by questions on rhetorical strategies and other relevant matters.

Given the title of this textbook, a definition of “issues” is in order. An issue is usually taken to mean a topic that is controversial, that prompts differences of opinion, or

that can be seen from different perspectives. It often raises questions or requires taking a close look at a problem. While this is not primarily an argument textbook, the inclusion of topics and essays guaranteed to spark controversy is deliberate. Many of the readings will surely prompt students to take opposing positions. Some of the readings are provocative; others may anger students. Such differences of opinion will not only generate lively class discussions, but they will also result in writing opportunities that engage students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following reviewers for their helpful suggestions on revisions to the new edition:

Valerie K. Anderson, *York College, The City University of New York*

Bim Angst, *Penn State Schuylkill*

M. Susan Bonifer, *Mountain State University*

Robert Brown, *Champlain College*

Charlene Bunnell, *University of Delaware*

Joan Canty, *Columbia College*

Edward Carmien, *Westminster Choir College of Rider University*

Jo Cavins, *North Dakota State University*

N. Bradley Christie, *Erskine College*

Judith Cortelloni, *Lincoln College*

Robert Con Davis-Undiano, *University of Oklahoma*

Stacey Donohue, *Central Oregon Community College*

Clark L Draney, *Idaho State University*

Sarah Duerden, *Arizona State University*

David Elias, *Eastern Kentucky University*

Virginia Fambrough, *Baker University*

James Gifford, *Mohawk Valley Community College*

Keith Hale, *South Texas Community College*

Letitia Harding, *University of the Incarnate Word*

M. Hunter Hayes, *University of Southern Mississippi*

Kathy Henkins, *Mt. San Antonio College*

Hyo-Chang Hong, *Marshall University*

Elizabeth Huston, *Eastfield College*

William T. Hyndman, III, *Rosemont College*

Karen R. Jacobs, *Louisiana Tech University*

Margaret Johnson, *Idaho State University*

Joyce Kessel, *Villa Maria College*

James Kirpatrick, *Central Piedmont Community College*
 Mary Kramer, *University of Massachusetts, Lowell*
 Linda Lawliss, *College of the Desert*
 Jun Liu, *California State University, Los Angeles*
 Jeanette Lugo, *Valdosta State University*
 Christopher Mattson, *Keene State College*
 James McNamara, *Alverno College*
 Brett J. Millan, *South Texas Community College*
 Deborah Montuori, *Shippensburg University*
 Rosemary Moore, *Iowa Western Community College*
 Sean Nighbert, *St. Philip's College*
 Debbie Ockey, *Fresno City College*
 Debbie Olson, *Central Washington University*
 Marc Prinz, *Hofstra University*
 Louise Rosenberg, *University of Hartford*
 Kiki Leigh Rydell, *Montana State University*
 Daniel Schenker, *University of Alabama in Huntsville*
 Judith Schmitt, *Macon State College*
 Marilyn Schultz, *Delta State University*
 Allison D. Smith, *Middle Tennessee State University*
 Harvey Solganick, *LeTourneau University*
 Shannon C. Stewart, *Coastal Carolina University*
 Rosalee Stilwell, *Indiana University of Pennsylvania*
 Steve Street, *The State University of New York*
 William Tashman, *Baruch College, The City University of New York*
 Tiffany Trent, *Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University*
 Sandi Ward, *West Virginia University*
 Gwen Wilkinson, *University of Texas at San Antonio*

As always, I thank my family for their support: my daughters Heather Schilling and Laurel Yahi and son Jeremy White as well as my sons-in-law Brian Schilling and Gianni Yahi and daughter-in-law Jenni White. My grandchildren Elizabeth and Lucas Schilling, Zack and Celia Yahi, and Che White were a delightful distraction. I dedicate this edition of the book to my step-children Robin Ackley-Fay and her husband Terry Fay and Jon and Laurie Ackley. Both couples were married during the year this book was in production.

I am grateful to my colleagues in the English Department at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. In particular, Tom Bloom and Ann Bloom shared their suggestions on writing an opinion paper, which I have incorporated into the discussion of the research paper, and Don Pattow, former Director of Freshman English, gave me materials on writing across the curriculum. I also want to thank the

following students in my English classes who gave permission to use material from their research papers: Erin Anderson, Rita Fleming, Nathan Hayes, Missy Heiman, Linda Kay Jeske, Kari Kolb, Steph Niedermair, Barbara Novak, Shawn Ryan, Jodi Simon, Jennifer Sturm, and Cory L. Vandertie.

Finally, heartfelt gratitude goes to my editor, Edward Dodd III, who was truly a pleasure to work with. He provided wonderful guidance and insightful comments at every stage of the development of the book.

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