



FROM INQUIRY *to* ACADEMIC WRITING

A Practical Guide

Stuart Greene
April Lidinsky

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Bedford/St. Martin's

BOSTON ■ NEW YORK

For Bedford/St. Martin's

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Art Director: Donna Lee Dennison

Cover Art: Lucio del Pezzo, *Casellario*, 1988. Painted wood.

© Berardinelli Arte, Verona, Italy.

Composition: Stratford/TexTech

Printing and Binding: R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company

President: Joan E. Feinberg

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Editor in Chief: Karen S. Henry

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2007934302

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Manufactured in the United States of America.

2 1 0 9 8
f e d c b

For information, write: Bedford/St. Martin's, 75 Arlington Street, Boston, MA 02116 (617-399-4000)

ISBN-10: 0-312-45166-0

ISBN-13: 978-0-312-45166-0

Acknowledgments

Jean Anyon. "The Economic Is Political." From *Radical Possibilities: Public Policy, Urban Education and a New Social Movement* by Jean Anyon. Copyright © 2005 by Taylor & Francis Group LLC. Reprinted by permission of Routledge, an imprint of Taylor & Francis Group.

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Preface for Instructors

From *Inquiry to Academic Writing: A Practical Guide* is a rhetoric that introduces students to college-level reading, thinking, inquiry, analysis, and argument. It is based on a first-year composition course that we have taught over the years in which we guide students through the writing process to produce essays that use evidence and sources in increasingly complex ways. Throughout, we present academic writing as conversational — as a collegial exchange of ideas, undertaken in a spirit of collaboration in the pursuit of new knowledge. On the one hand, we want students to see that academic writing is a social act in which they are expected to work responsibly with the ideas of others. On the other hand, we encourage students to see themselves as makers of knowledge — as writers who use sources in a variety of ways to develop and advance arguments that make new contributions to ongoing conversations about ideas and issues.

We aim to demystify cross-curricular thinking, reading, and writing by breaking down their processes into a series of manageable habits and skills that students can learn and practice. Because academic writing involves complex and overlapping skills, we use a sequenced “step-by-step” pedagogy to clarify (without oversimplifying) the various skills involved in developing academic arguments. For example, we explain that students must learn to make inquiries (by asking questions to discover and explore issues) and value complexity (by avoiding binary thinking and engaging with multiple perspectives); and then we also provide activities to help students practice and develop those habits of mind.

■ The Book's Organization

Although you can teach the chapters in any order, adapting them to suit the needs of your course and your students, the arc of the text follows an incremental and cumulative sequence that begins with academic thinking and proceeds to academic reading, academic research, and finally to academic writing. That said, we hasten to add that we constantly emphasize the recursive and overlapping nature of these skills (especially the connection between reading and writing) and the centrality of the writing process. Indeed, we assume students will be writing throughout the semester, and so punctuate every chapter with short readings and activities designed to get students to pause and try out the kinds of writing they will need to practice through the various stages of developing their papers.

We begin with an introduction for students, in which we explain what academic writing is, and how the book is designed to help them develop as academic thinkers, readers, and writers. Then, in Part One, Chapter 1 presents an overview of academic writing as a process motivated by inquiry, and is followed by chapters that offer strategies for reading critically and working with other writers' ideas. Inevitably, reading and writing processes are intertwined. Thus in Chapter 2 we encourage students to practice "writerly reading" — reading texts as writers who can analyze critically the decisions other writers make (whether those writers are professional scholars or college peers) — so that they can implement the most appropriate strategies given their own purpose for writing. While Chapters 2 through 5 address the nuts and bolts of getting started on writing, from how to mark a text to forming questions and developing a working thesis, we recognize that this process is rarely linear and that it benefits from conversation with invested readers. Chapters 6 and 7 help students develop and support their theses by providing a range of strategies for finding and working with sources — for example, showing students the ways they can use summary, paraphrase, and synthesis in the service of their purpose as writers. In Chapters 8 and 9 we link writerly reading with the ability to practice "readerly writing," or writing that is self-conscious about the needs of real readers.

Chapter 10 presents revision in the context of peer groups. The responses of classmates can help students determine when they might need to read additional material before shaping more effective research questions, for example, or when a draft indicates that more evidence-gathering will be needed to support a student's argument. Our supporting materials for peer workshops foster productive group interaction at every stage of writing, including reading, collecting, planning, developing, researching (for some assignments), and revising. These materials emphasize the spirit of inquiry that guides effective responses to peer writing and the conversational aspect of writing that occurs during workshops and on the page as a writer engages the ideas of others. Finally, in Chapter 11, we provide students with strategies for conducting original research that

build upon earlier chapters on using personal experience or writing a researched argument.

As we noted earlier, although the process of developing an academic argument can be messy and unruly at times, the structured step-by-step pedagogy in Part One should support students during each stage of the process. Most readings are followed by “For Analysis and Discussion” questions that send students back into the reading to identify and internalize the rhetorical moves writers make. In every chapter, “Steps to . . .” boxes summarize the major points about each stage of thinking, reading, and writing, offering quick references that bring the most salient information into focus for student review and practice. “Practice Sequences” in each chapter ask students to try out and build on the strategies we have explained or demonstrated. We also provide intermittent templates, formulas, and worksheets that students may use as heuristics or to organize information as they read and write. Your students should feel further supported and encouraged by seeing the abundance of student writing we use as examples in Part One, side by side with the examples of professional writing we include.

■ The Text Is Available Combined with a Reader

From Inquiry to Academic Writing: A Text and Reader features the text chapters in this book, plus a reader that focuses on cross-disciplinary conversations inside (and outside) of the academy. The substantial readings are by well-known academic writers and public intellectuals, and the themes address issues of education, globalization, race, class, gender, and popular culture. You can view the table of contents and request a copy at www.bedfordstmartins.com.

■ Additional Resources

An instructor’s manual, *Resources for Teaching FROM INQUIRY TO ACADEMIC WRITING* can be downloaded from the companion Web site, www.bedfordstmartins.com/frominquiry. The manual addresses every step of the process of academic writing we set forth in the text, with additional comments on the readings integrated in the text chapters. Not only do we discuss many of the issues involved in taking our rhetorical approach to academic argument — problems and questions students and instructors may have — we also suggest background readings on the research informing our approach.

Additional resources on the Web site include downloadable templates, worksheets, and summary boxes for students; TopLinks that supplement the readings in the book; and connections to the suite of online resources offered by Bedford/St. Martin’s, including *Re: Writing*.

■ Acknowledgments

We would first like to thank the many reviewers who commented on the proposal and the manuscript. Their comments were invariably useful, and frequently cheering as well. The list of reviewers includes Angela Adams, Loyola University Chicago; Steve Adkison, Idaho State University; Teresa Fernandez Arab, University of Kansas; Yesho Atil, Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College; Paula Bacon, Pace University–Pleasantville; Susan Bailor, Front Range Community College; Mary Ellen Bertolini, Middlebury College; Laurel Bollinger, University of Alabama–Huntsville; Margaret Bonesteel, Syracuse University; Laurie Britt-Smith, St. Louis University; Lise Buranen, California State University, Los Angeles; Marie Coffey, San Antonio College; Carolyn Cole, Oklahoma Baptist University; Tami Comstock-Peavy, Arapahoe Community College; Emily Cospers, Delgado Community College; Ryan Crider, Missouri State University; Calum Cunningham, Fanshawe College–London; J. Madison Davis, University of Oklahoma–Norman; Erin Denney, Community College of San Francisco; Jason DePolo, North Carolina A&T State University; Brock Dethier, Utah State University; Lisa Egan, Brown University; Ed Eleazer, Francis Marion University; Elaine Fredericksen, University of Texas–El Paso; Rhoda Greenstone, Long Beach City College; Rima Gulshan, George Mason University; Sinceree Gunn, University of Alabama–Huntsville; Ann Hartney, Fort Lewis College; Virginia Scott Hendrickson, Missouri State University; Zachery Hickman, University of Miami; Monica Hogan, Johnson County Community College; Karen Keaton Jackson, North Carolina Central University; Margaret Johnson, Idaho State University; Laura Katsaros, Monmouth University; Howard Kerner, Polk Community College; Jeff Klausman, Whatcom Community College; Tamara Kuzmenkov, Tacoma Community College; Erin Lebacqz, University of New Mexico; Lindsay Lewan, Arapahoe Community College; April Lewandowski, Front Range Community College–Westminster; Renee Major, Louisiana State University; Mark McBeth, John Jay College; Timothy McGinn, Northwest Arkansas Community College; Erica Messenger, Bowling Green State University–Main; Alyce Miller, Indiana University; Whitney Myers, University of New Mexico; Teddy Norris, St. Charles Community College; Lolly J. Ockerstrom, Park University; Jill Onega, University of Alabama–Huntsville; Robert Peltier, Trinity College; Jeanette Pierce, San Antonio College; Mary Jo Reiff, University of Tennessee; Mary Roma, New York University; David Ryan, University of San Francisco; Daniel Schenker, University of Alabama–Huntsville; Roy Stamper, North Carolina State University; Scott Stevens, Western Washington University; Sarah Stone, University of California–Berkeley; Joseph Sullivan, Marietta College; Gretchen Treadwell, Fort Lewis College; Charles Warren, Salem State College; Patricia Webb, Arizona State University; Susan Garrett Weiss, Goucher College; Worth Weller, Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne; and Jackie White, Lewis University.

We are also grateful to many people at Bedford/St. Martin's, starting with president Joan E. Feinberg, editorial director Denise B. Wydra, and editor-in-chief Karen S. Henry. We would especially like to thank executive editor Leasa Burton, who believed in this project early on and told us to be prepared to revise — revise a lot. (And we have!) Steve Scipione has been a terrific editor: he read our work carefully and offered sage advice at every stage of the process. We could not have completed this project without Leasa and Steve and their tireless assistants, Sarah Guariglia and Marisa Feinstein. In the marketing department, we thank marketing director Karen M. Soeltz, and are especially grateful to marketing manager Karita dos Santos and her assistant Jessica Chesnutt. The talented production department conscientiously steered the manuscript through a demanding schedule to create the book you hold. We thank managing editor Elizabeth M. Schaaf; assistant managing editor John Amburg; Lori Chong Roncka, the book's patient and scrupulous production editor; and their assistant Lidia McDonald-Carr. Barbara Bell provided exceptionally alert and constructive copyediting, while Sandy Schechter and Warren Drabek negotiated the complicated process of acquiring permissions. Anna Palchik oversaw the design of the book, and Donna Dennison designed the cover.

A note from Stuart Greene: I want to thank the many students and faculty with whom I've worked over the years. Specifically, I would like to thank Kelly Kinney, Stephen Fox, Rebecca Nowacek, and Katherine Weese, who served as my assistant directors in the past and who taught me a great deal about the teaching of writing. I also would like to thank Robert Kachur, who made important contributions to early iterations of this book. And I will always appreciate the many discussions I have had with John Duffy over these many years and with Connie Mick, a tireless and innovative teacher of writing. A special thanks to Mike Palmquist with whom I taught writing as "conversation" more than twenty years ago and who gave this book direction. Finally, very special thanks to Denise Della Rossa, who has listened to me rehearse these ideas for years. I dedicate this book to her.

A note from April Lidinsky: I am grateful for the superb pedagogical training I received from Lou Kelly at the University of Iowa and Kurt Spellmeyer and Hugh English at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, who demonstrated the deep pleasures of theorizing and practicing a hermeneutical approach to writing. Ron Christ, also at Rutgers, taught me the ropes of classical rhetoric and the connected delights of close reading and "close writing." My colleagues and graduate student instructors at the University of Notre Dame, especially Julie Bruneau, Connie Mick, Marion C. Rohrleitner, Misty Schieberle, and Scott T. Smith, inspired me with their energy and vision. Without students to test and sharpen our ideas, this book would not be possible; my teaching has deepened through

interactions with many wonderful students over the years. More personally, I am indebted to JoElla Hunter and Tom Lidinsky, my parents, for their model of lifelong reading and learning, and to Ken Smith for his talent for crafting sentences as well as a life of meaning. My thinking, writing, and daily life are immeasurably richer for his partnership.

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