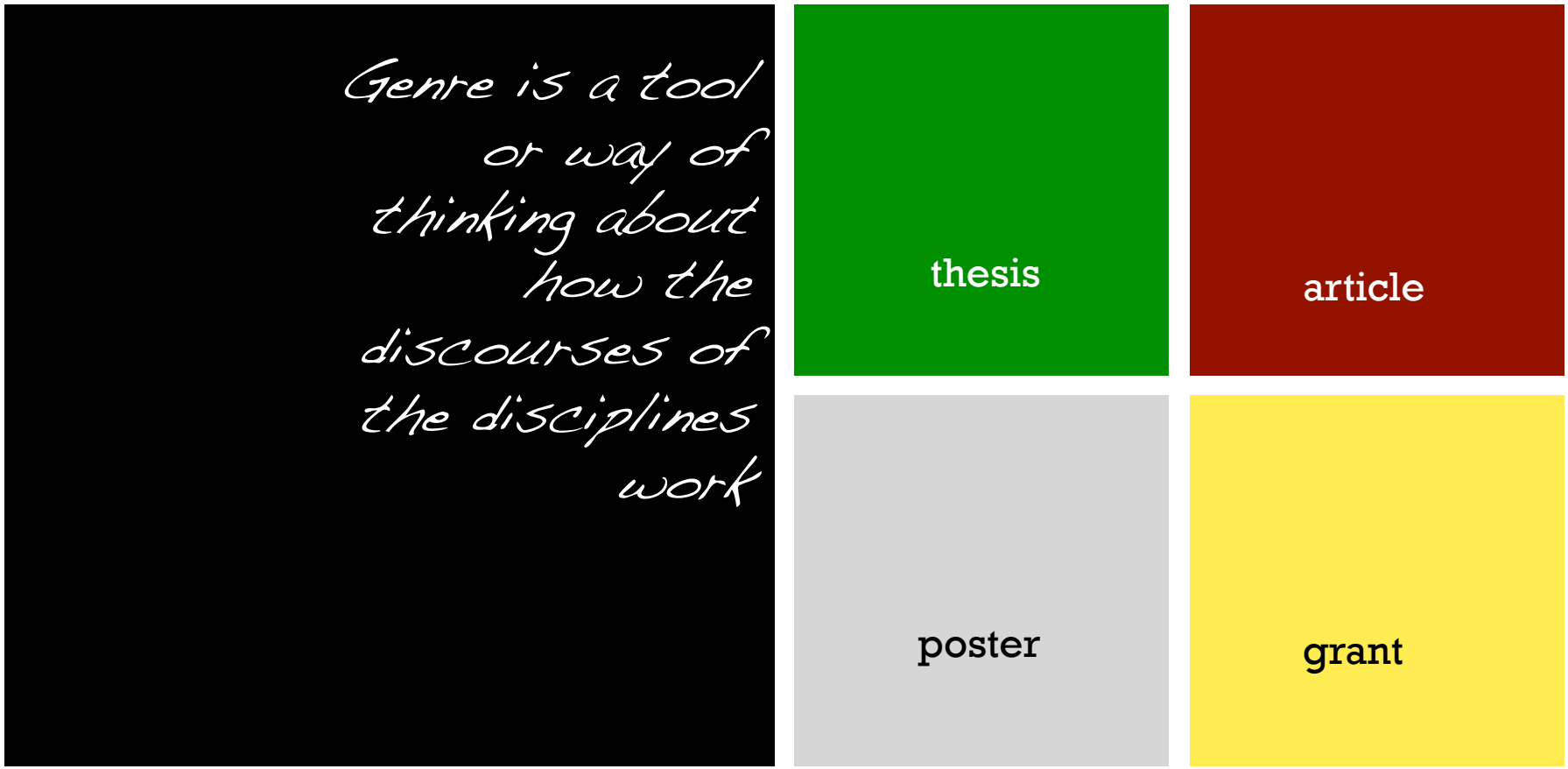
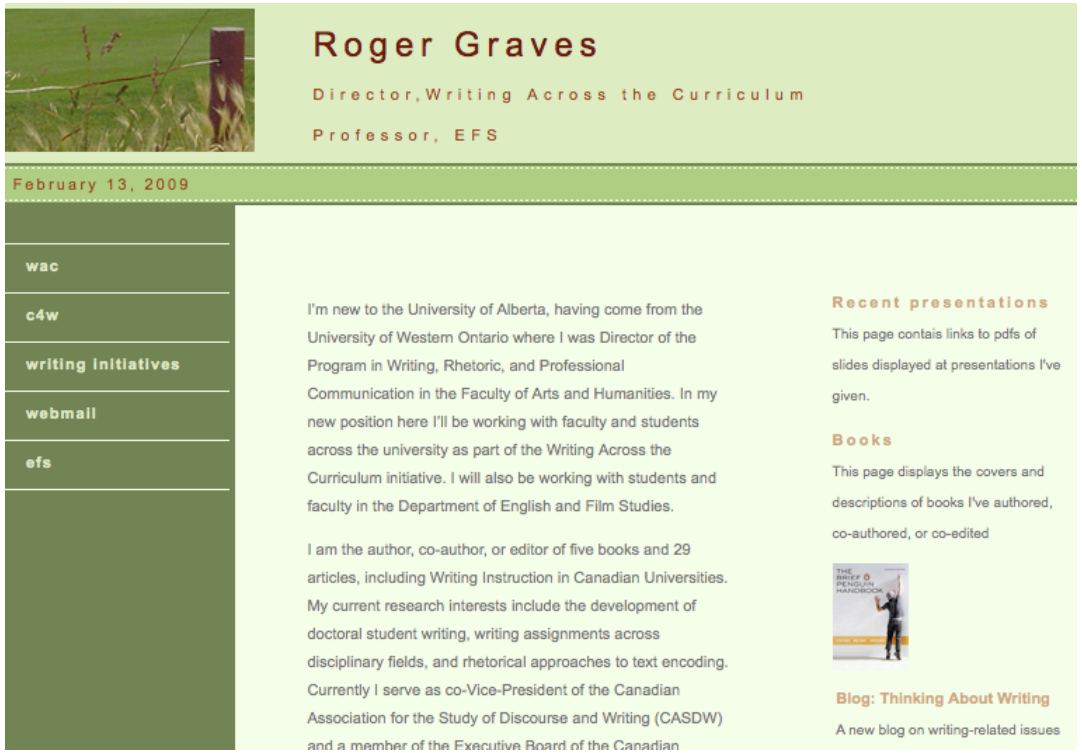


Writing (n./vb.) Genres

Writing Across the Curriculum
Graduate Student Workshop
Fall, 2010
Roger Graves
Director, Writing Across the Curriculum

Roger Graves



http://www.ualberta.ca/~graves1/index.html

Centre for Writers

http://www.c4w.arts.ualberta.ca/

Academic Support Centre

Home > Graduate Resources

Graduate Resources

Print this page

WORKSHOPS

If you are a graduate student or a post-doc, consider taking one of our writing or learning workshops designed specifically with your needs in mind. Detailed workshop information including dates and times are available in the menu on the top right of the screen. You can register over the phone at 780-492-2682 or in person at 2-703 SUB. All forms of payment are accepted.

PERSONALIZED ASSISTANCE

Individual LEARNING Consultations $20/session or $50/3 sessions
Receive expert individualized help with time management, conference posters, or data presentation, reading research papers, memory improvement, etc. as they pertain to your unique situation. We can also assist with studying, exams, or any learning task. Appointments must be scheduled with Karen in advance.

Graduate Resources

Graduate WRITING Workshops Fall 2010

Graduate LEARNING Workshops Fall 2010

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> Graduate Resources

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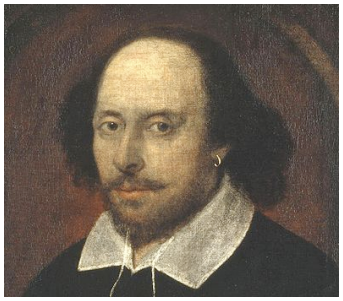
Levels of analysis

1. Discourse/sentence
2. Rhetoric/whole unit of discourse (document)
3. Genre/context within a discipline
4. Larger social meanings/issues

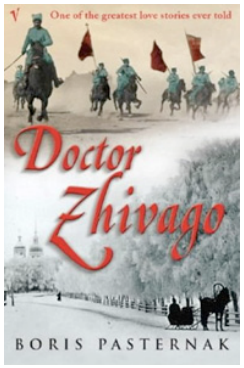
Genres in Literary Circles

- Poems

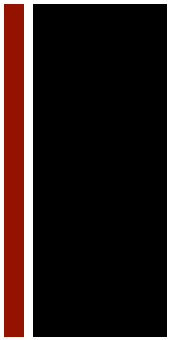
- Plays



- Novels



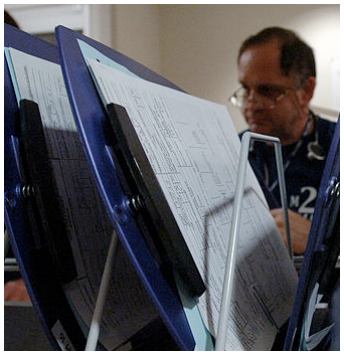
Genres at work



- Memos
- Letters
- Email messages
- Reports
- Performance reviews
- Trip reports

Medical genres

- Charts
- Patient records
- Reports



Canada Communicable Disease Report
CCDR Weekly

Infectious Diseases News Brief - January 29, 2010

[Current Issue -Table of contents]

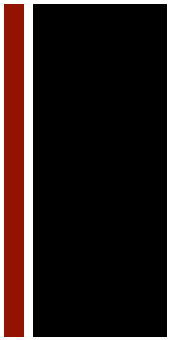
Tracking MRSA Evolution and Transmission: Revolutionary Strategy for Control and Prevention of Infection

For the first time, researchers have shown how transmission of MRSA from one person to another can be precisely tracked in a hospital setting. The team have developed a remarkable new method that can 'zoom' from large-scale inter-continental transmission events to the much finer detail of person-to-person infection of MRSA within a single hospital. The ability to track strains in this way will enable researchers to understand how strains can spread so rapidly, and should lead to novel infection control strategies, not only for MRSA but also for other emerging superbugs.

Genres you write

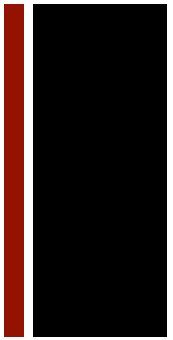
- Working with people sitting near you, list the written genres you've worked recently at home or at work.

Common genres



- Home
- Work/school

Discourse->Rhetoric->Genre



- Features shared among text types
- Analysis at the level of groups of texts
- Much attention in genre studies to the social functions of texts —the work they do to maintain relationships socially, the ways they function to regulate social systems (narratives that accompany graduate school applications)

Genre in Writing Studies

- "Every text is organized within a specific genre according to its communicative purposes, as part of the conditions of discourse production, which generate social uses that determine any and every text." (Brasil quoted in Bazerman x).
  Bazerman, C., A. Bonini, & D. Figueiredo. *Genre in a Changing World* (2009). Fort Collins and West Lafayette, WAC Clearinghouse and Parlour Press.

- "Thesis proposals organized within a specific genre according to its communicative purposes, as part of the conditions of discourse production, which generate social uses that determine any and every text."

Genre as social action

- S. Miller (1984) described genre as a rhetorical action that recurs within a social setting
- The sharing of meaning is intersubjective and negotiated through discourse (spoken and written language acts) among the group—again, perhaps thesis proposals might be a useful example; journal article reviewers perform a similar function through their reviews of manuscripts
- These shared discourses form into typical types of documents (genres)

Genre as social action

- Genres shape the entire social interaction, not just the documents themselves
- Research application: Writing a research grant, for example, doesn't just mean filling in a form; what is written will come to structure my daily life, cause other documents (articles) to be written, cause students to be accepted into a program because a supervisor has money to pay them, and so on
- Teaching example: In classrooms, when an instructor selects a genre that then structures and limits the acceptable written responses to that assignment; it structures what is talked about in class; it causes other texts (textbooks, readings) to be read and discussed

Discourse communities

- Swales (1991) developed the concept of discourse communities to explain the purposes within documents
- His concept of rhetorical "moves" within documents—such as "establish a research territory"—leads to one method for establishing the typical purposes for a document
- SSHRC/NSERC/CIHR research grant evaluation committees form into discourse communities for example

Genre sets

- Genres typically do not occur alone but instead as part of a set of social actions within a group
- Graduate students may write a variety of related documents: grant applications, course papers, exams, conference proposals, posters, a thesis
- Genres proliferate and change leading some researchers to call them "stable for now" (Schryer) or describe them as phenomenological: they exist if you see them

Genres and globalization

- Knowledge-based economies depend on the sharing of written information across borders and within disciplines
- These documents share features, communicative purposes, and specialized discourses
- Graduate students who move around the globe to study must learn these specialized discourses and genres

Bazerman, "Introduction."

Genre and disciplines

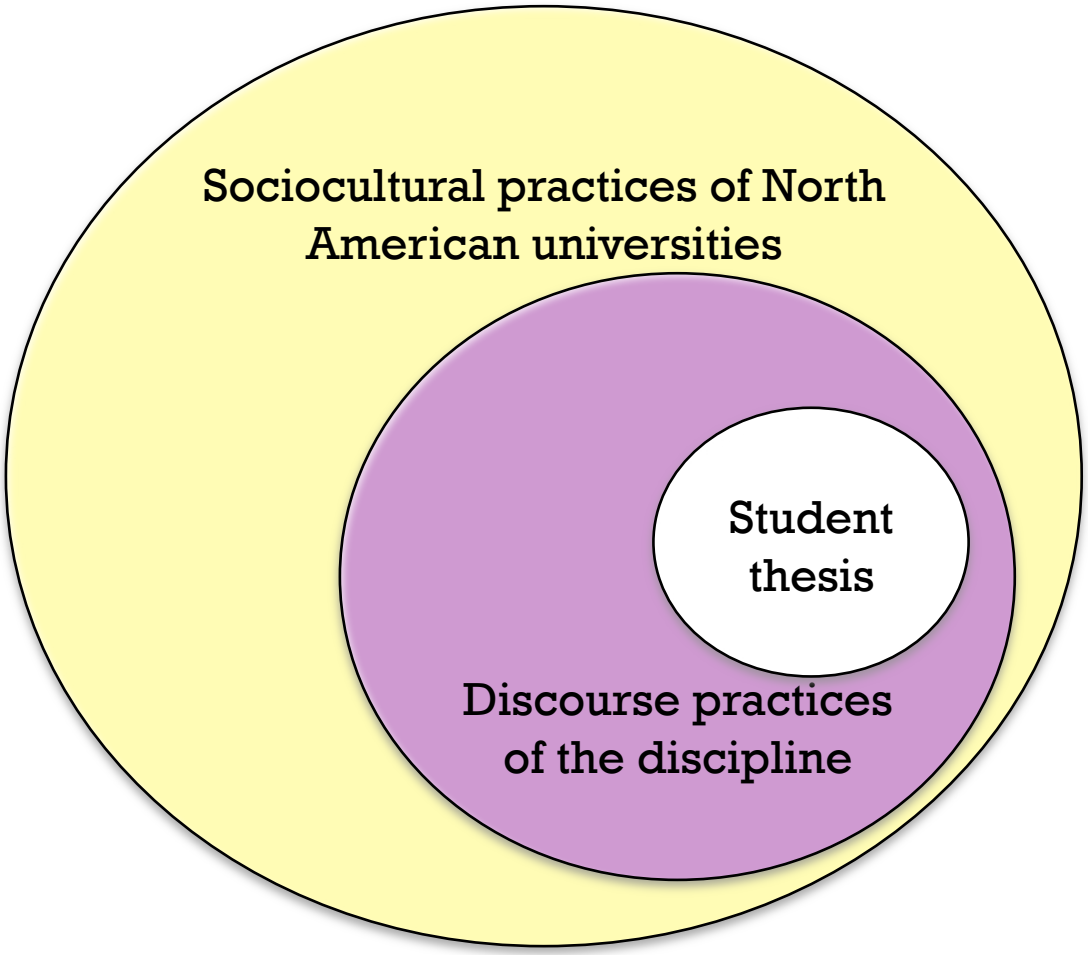
- Genre is a tool or way of thinking about how these discourses of the disciplines work
- Genres are "focused, purposive, [and] highly differentiated task[s]"
- Genres are always situated within a context of power relations: funder/applicant, supervisor/student, FEC/worker

Bazerman, "Introduction."

~~Format~~/Genre

- Format refers to a description of the look or dimensions of a document: double-spaced, 500 words, 4 citations, APA style
- Genre refers instead to the communicative function of the document: to persuade me that your research is worth funding, that you follow acceptable research methods
- Think about assignment descriptions given to undergraduates—they often focus too much on format and offer little guidance about the intellectual task the assignment demands

Writing as social practice



Fairclough's three dimensions of discourse, as depicted in B. Kammler and P. Thomson, *Helping Doctoral Students Write Well*, p. 21.

Theories of research writing

- Research is writing
- Texts are not reality but versions of reality that re-present some aspects of reality
- A thesis is one of a set of related genres that govern graduate student social activity as professionals
- Writing is a social activity—it takes place among groups of people, not individuals each working alone

Kamler, B. and P. Thomson. *Helping Doctoral Students Write: Pedagogies for Supervision.* New York: Routledge, 2006.

Texts and Identity

- Kenneth Burke: rhetoric/persuasion depends upon identification between rhetor and audience
- Texts written by graduate students build their identity as a member of their discipline
- You as a professional are your textual self—or rather, selves: the stories you tell about yourself and your work

Discussion

- If writing is social in important ways, how do we create social structures to improve student writing?
- As graduate students move from reporters of knowledge to producers, how do you learn advanced discourse practices in your field?
- As graduate students, how do you advance your careers and improving our own writing ability?

The Literature Review as Genre

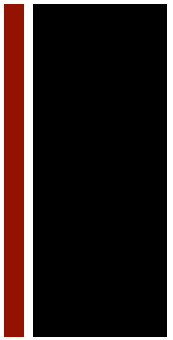
- The next segment of slides looks at the dissertation literature review as a genre
- Some of the slides look at the "moves" (after Swales) that are typically made in this genre

Pointing out a gap in literature: Excerpt 1.4

"Particularly worrisome has been the increase in adolescent gang membership. A subset of the offending population, estimated at 68% of institutionalized youth, are affiliated with a gang, yet **little research has been done to distinguish gang members from other types of young offenders** (Kratcoski &Kratcoski, 1996); Richter-White, 2003). It may be that young people are turning to gangs for protection from other gangs, as a way to gain respect, to escape from troubled homes, because their friends are doing it, peer pressure, or as a way to earn a living through drug trafficking, illegal weapons sales, robbery, and theft (Lloyd, 2002). However, the **reasons why** adolescents choose to join a gang **remain understudied** with **no clear answers**.

–Nicole Kostiuk, *Attachment in Incarcerated Adolescent Gang Members*, 2007.

Pointing out gaps in the literature



- Read Sample 2 on the handout, "Many ideas have …"
- To what uses does the writer put citation in this sample?
- What is the writer's attitude towards earlier work applying game theoretical modeling to questions of animal communication?
- What strategies does the writer use to signal to readers his assessment of this earlier work?

Cite Sources that Support your Methods

"Vaccinia virus (VV) is considered the prototypic poxvirus, and is amenable to **genetic manipulation** through a multitude of available DNA recombination tools (450). VV has also been used extensively as a **gene delivery mechanism**, as its large DNA genome makes it relatively easy to insert foreign DNA sequences for protein expression in mammalian cells (50, 100). Despite the fact that the natural host for VV is unknown, **VV remains an excellent model in which to study virus:host interactions due to its complex genome and vat array of anti-immune mechanisms** (169). In response to the selective pressures initiated by the host immune system, poxviruses such as vaccinia virus encode a vast array or proteins which modulate both innate and adaptive immune responses (Table 1.2) (21, 105)."

John Taylor, *The inhibition of apoptosis and Bax activation by mitochondrial antiapoptotic proteins encoded by vaccinia virus and ectomelia virus*, Fall 2007. (bolding added)

What should a literature review accomplish?

- Sketch out the nature of the field or fields relevant to the inquiry (often including some history)
- Identify major debates and define contentious terms
- Establish which studies, ideas, and/or methods are most pertinent to the study
- Locate gaps in the field
- Create the warrant for the study in question
- Identify the contribution the study will make

What is your argument?

- Outline the argument that you intend to make in the literature review of your thesis
- Don't worry about maintaining an objective style at this point
- Even if you don't have all the details worked out, get down as much as you can to sketch out where you want your argument to go

Write an abstract of your thesis

- Draft an abstract of your thesis (or planned thesis).
- Include one or two sentences summarizing the essential background concepts
- Identify the gap(s) in the literature that your project will fill
- Include one sentence identifying your methodology (two sentences if it is complex)
- Identify why your work is important and what it contributes to knowledge in the area identified above