Genre is a tool or way of thinking about how the discourses of the disciplines work

thesis

article

poster

grant

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/

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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
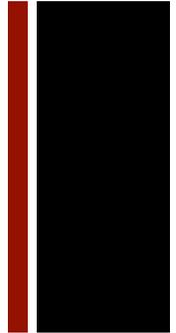
Genres at work

- Memos

- Letters

- Email messages

- Reports

- Performance reviews

- Trip reports
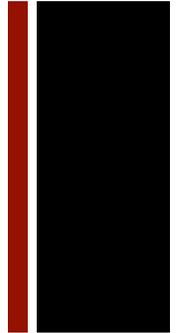
Genres you write

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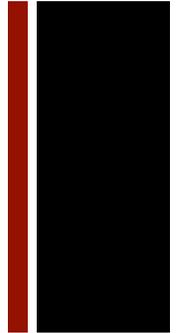
Common genres

- Home

- Work/school
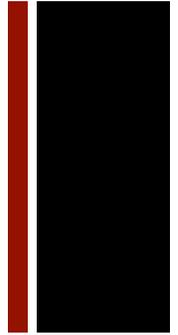
Discourse->Rhetoric->Genre

- 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)
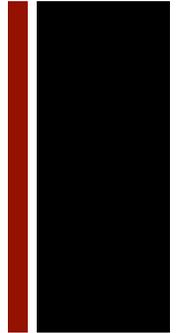
Genre in Writing Studies

- "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)
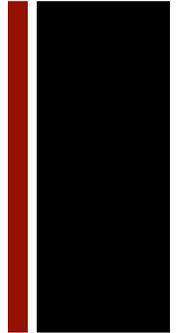
Genre as social action

- 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
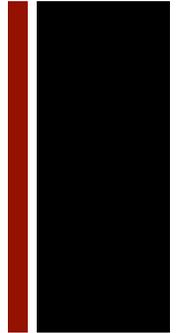
Discourse communities

- 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
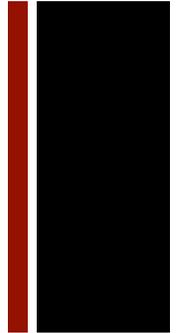
Genre sets

- 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
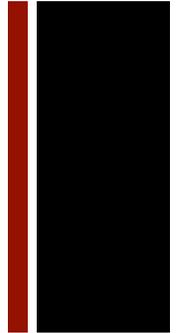
Genres and globalization

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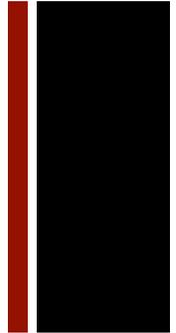
Writing as social practice
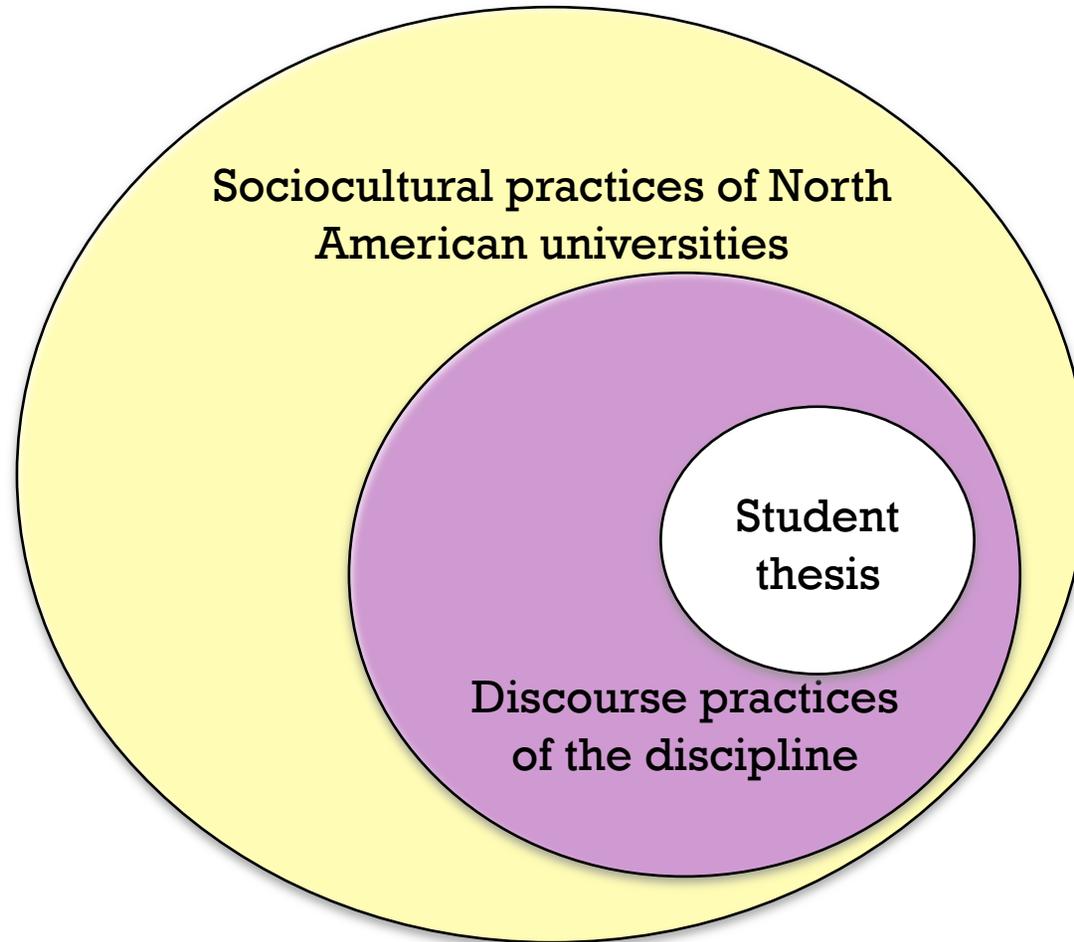
Fairclough's three dimensions of discourse, as depicted in B. Kammler and P. Thomson, *Helping Doctoral Students Write Well*, p. 21.

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
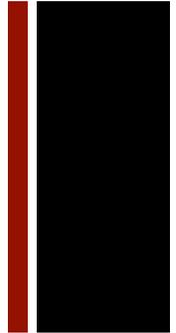
Discussion

- 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?
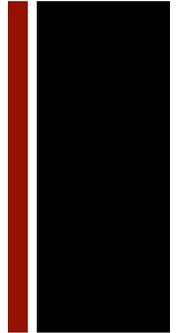
Elements of Scholarly/Academic papers
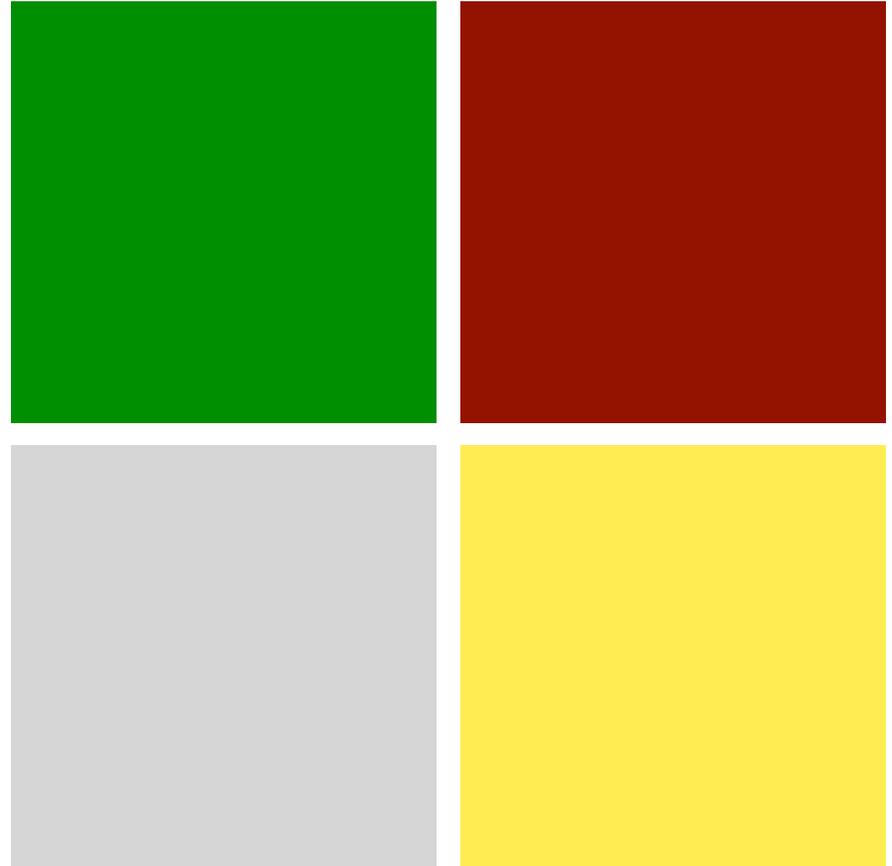
A WAC Graduate Student Seminar

Roger Graves/Heather Graves

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 among the group—again, perhaps FEC meetings to rank professors 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)
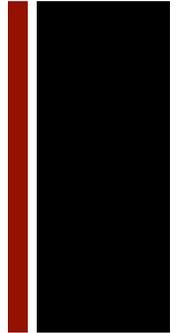
Discourse communities
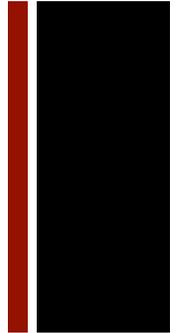
- Swales (1991) developed the concept of discourse communities to explain the purposes within documents
- His concept of rhetorical "moves" within documents—such as "establish a research territory"—leads to one method for establishing the typical purposes or communicative aims for a document
- SSHRC 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
- The research article is one of a set of genres: a chapter in a dissertation, a research grant, research grant reports, peer review documents
- **Other related documents?**
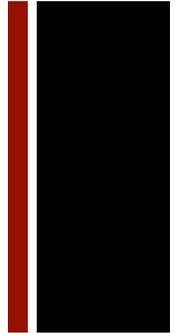
TEXT TYPE: RESEARCH
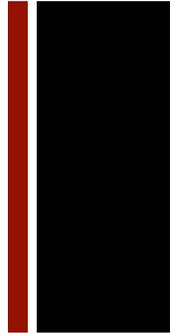
What are the features of the research article your group is working with?

Example:
Does it include an abstract? If so, how long is it? Is it in "plain" language?

MOVES

What argumentative moves can you identify in your article?

Sample: "Taken together, findings from these and other studies suggest that miscommunication and lack of communication about care preferences and decision making may be fairly universal within caregiving families and not uncommon in the interactions between providers and families" ("Decision Making in Families Facing. . .")

Move: X ("miscommunication and lack of communication")
is a wide-spread problem; therefore worthy of further study

MOVES

Sample: "But few studies have examined the views and care preferences of people with dementia. This means their views aren't well considered as care strategies are selected (Cohen, 1991) " ("Do Caregivers Know . . .")

Move: Few studies have examined X ("the views and care preferences of people with dementia")

X should be considered in the decision making process when designing care

+ Informal Argument

Claim	←	Link (because)	←	Reason

| Challenges	Evidence
(How, So what, Why?)	(Data, Statistics, Expert opinion, Visuals, Other studies, etc. [What counts is often discipline-specific])
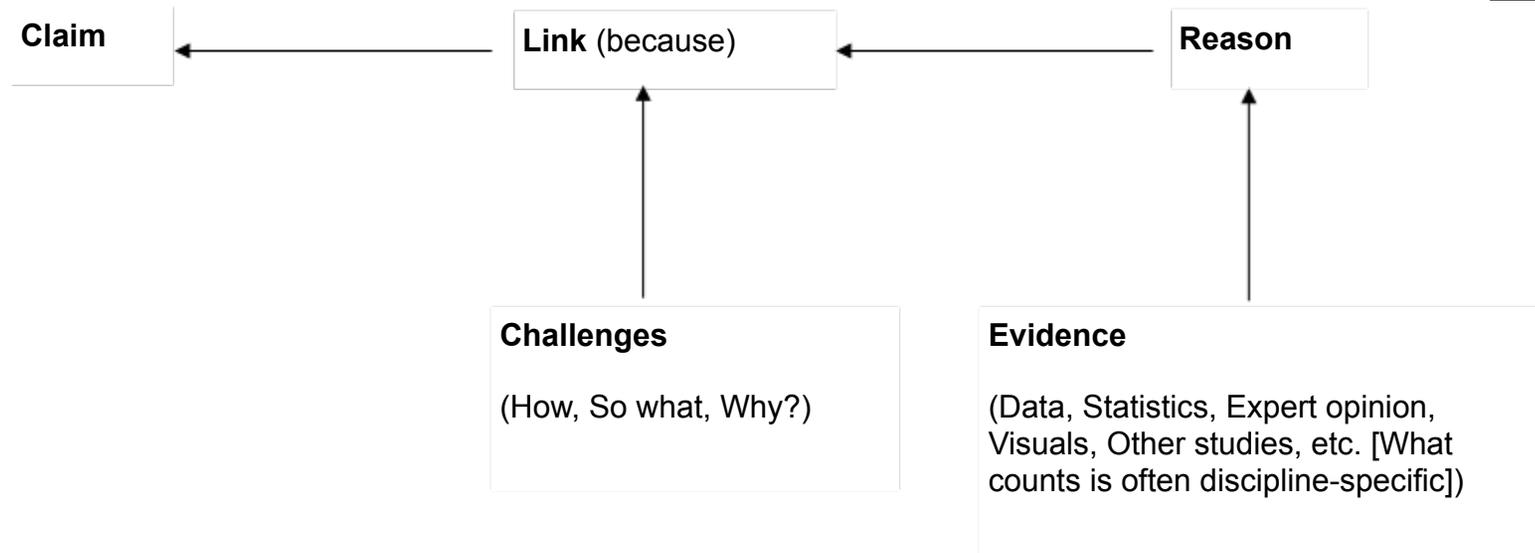
What argument does the abstract or introduction present?

# What arguments appear in your sample article?

ORGANIZATION
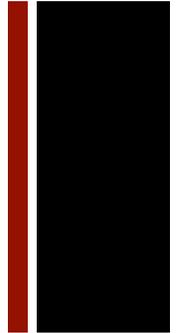
Genetically-modified soybeans

1. Introduction
2. Materials and methods
   2.1 Samples
   2.2 DNA extraction
   [continue from this point]

3. Results and discussion
4. Concluding remarks
5. Acknowledgements
6. References

How is your sample article organized?
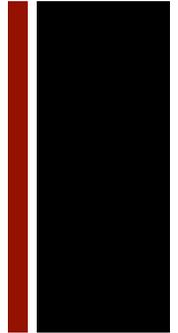
What kinds of articles are there?

- Theoretical?

- Overview?

- Experimental?
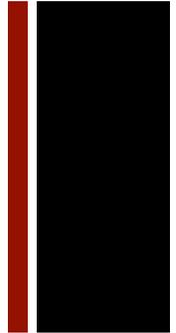
TEXTUAL IDENTITY OF AUTHOR(S)

How does the author identify him or her self in the text?

No direct reference to author except parenthetical citations

Example: "Recent work with family care dyads indicates that older adults . . . slightly less emphasis on social interactions (Whitlatch et al, in press)."

Direct statement of research findings using present tense

Example: "Two interventions in particular show promise because they address a number of issues, including everyday decision making. . .." (Whitlatch, p. 92).

USING "I" AS A PERSUASIVE DEVICE

Example: "Instead we need to explore ways of scaffolding students' learning and using knowledge . . ." (Hyland, "A brief overview," p. 21).

Identification: We (author and reader) work together to solve problem

Where? Conclusion of section critiquing process theory Co-ops reader to find a better solution
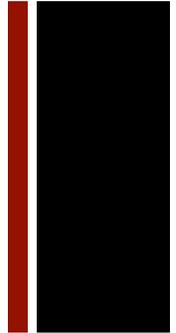
Does the article use visuals?

- Does the article use visuals?
- What kind of visuals are included?
- What work do the visuals do in the article?
- How are the visuals linked to the text in the publication?
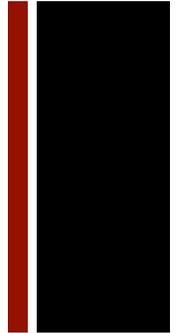
Methods

- How is the methods section of your sample article organized?

- What level of description does it provide about the methods used?

- Do the authors cite other research articles in this section?
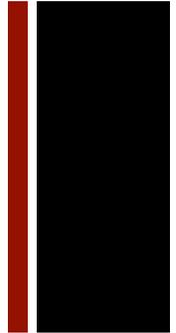
Sample Methods statements

- In air (A): Specimens were cured in a water tank saturated with lime at 20 ± 2 C for 3 days, and then kept at laboratory medium for 2 years,

- Because the number of specimens was too high, The Taguchi Test Method was used to reduce the number of the tests to be applied. Thus, an experimental design consisting of 27 different combinations was selected taking L27 test model into consideration.

- Kackar (1985) pointed out that a number of performance statistics (more than 60) was developed depending on the nature of the problem that was investigated.

Results

- Do the authors present graphs and tables in this section?

- Do the authors summarize and describe?

- Do they present arguments to explain the data?

- Do they cite other research articles in this section?
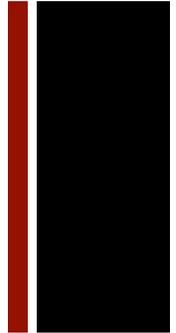
Discussion

- Do the authors present visual evidence in this section?

- Do they present arguments that tell you how to interpret their results?

- Do they cite other research?
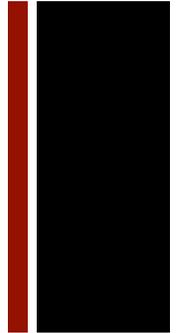
Sample R&D statements

- The unit weights and the transmission factors of the specimens obtained from the experiments were listed in Table 5.

- As it can be seen from the figures, the transmission factors increase exponentially with increasing energy supplied by 133Ba in the range of 30.85–276.85 keV.

- These results show that the radiation attenuation of the concrete increased in direct proportion to the density of the concrete. In other words, highdensity concrete attenuates more radiation.
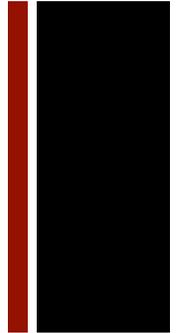
Conclusions

- Within the framework of this study, it can be concluded that the most important parameter affecting the attenuation of radiation of normal-weight concrete is the water/cement ratio. This parameter is followed by the cement content. Curing conditions and air entraining agents have little effect in comparison to the W/C ratio and the amount of cement.
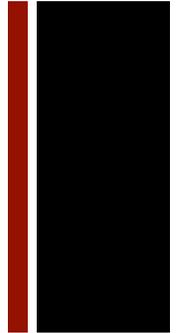
References

- How many?

- What kind?