A (RE)NEW(ED) CIVIC RHETORIC: REREADING ISOCRATES FOR THE

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

by

D. ALEXIS HART

(Under the Direction of Michelle Ballif)

ABSTRACT

Arguing for a renewal of Isocrates' pedagogical techniques, I revise the first-year college writing course and reinvent it as a course in which students not only learn how to produce "academic" writing and to critique or appreciate extant texts but also learn how to use their writing to become active, engaged citizens in communities beyond the classroom and workplace. My proposal incorporates many of the innovative practices of existing composition pedagogies while adding and emphasizing the (re)new(ed) Isocratean concepts of public performance, political deliberation, and social action.

I begin by revisiting the history of how the rhetorically based liberal arts curriculum in American higher education evolved into a curriculum based on the pursuit of a professional degree in a major discipline. I demonstrate how the Isocratean goal of training students to become active, engaged public citizens largely has been replaced by the practice of training students to become individual wage earners and how the Isocratean model of a broadly based and extensive study of public and civic discourse generally has been replaced by a one- or two-semester course in "first-year composition."

Next, to construct a clearer picture of how Isocrates taught and how he developed his pedagogical practices, I examine Isocrates' educational background and his unique ability to synthesize what he considers to be the most useful parts of previous and competing pedagogies. Unlike many of his predecessors, he did not view discourse simply as a technical competency, a way of conveying an already existing reality, or as an uncontrollable force. Instead, he understood speaking and writing to be practical ways of generating, organizing, and circulating ideas and of making judgments, which makes him an excellent model for us to emulate.

I conclude by offering suggestions for applying Isocratean pedagogical practices in twenty-first century composition classrooms. I contend that students should be given more chances to produce and distribute discourses that might be read, considered, and acted upon outside the classroom, that explicitly attempt to contribute to and change what counts as knowledge, and that offer suggestions about what acts should be taken, what policies implemented, and what judgments made.

INDEX WORDS: Isocrates, Rhetoric, Composition, Civic Discourse, Public
                 Discourse, Pedagogy, First-year Writing

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DEDICATION

With thanks for the love and support of my parents,

Bud and Debby Hart,

and for

Michael Crowley,

without whom . . .

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Preface

Rereading and Rewriting History

As I embark upon my project to rewrite Isocrates' place in the history of rhetoric and composition and to apply his pedagogical methods to twenty-first century composition courses, I wish to acknowledge James Berlin's assertion that "any examination of rhetoric [. . .] can never be a disinterested arbiter of the ideological claims of others because it is always already serving certain ideological claims" ("Rhetoric and Ideology" 477). I have also taken into consideration John Poulakos's point that any discussion of the past "constitutes an interpretive construction from a particular perspective of the present" (*Sophistical Rhetoric* 3). In other words, I am aware that I am strategically motivated in my reading and appropriation of Isocrates' texts by my particular historical consequences, my own ideological construction, and my specific political agenda. Through my situated and strategic application of Isocrates' texts and pedagogical techniques to the present and my projection of them into the future, I am indicating that I am not interested primarily in preserving his texts as treasures of the past or simply hearkening back to "the good old days" of ancient Greece,[1] but that I am taking advantage of the way that readings of texts can change based on the context and time during which they are read. Furthermore, as a "(re)constructionist" historian,[2] I acutely realize that I cannot "disregard, untroubled, the distance separating our times, our society, and our culture from that of the ancients" (J. Poulakos, *Sophistical* 2). For instance, I want to acknowledge up front that the more obvious of the troublesome attitudes of fifth century Athens and of Isocrates himself include elitism, support of slavery, degradation of women, and barbarization of non-Greeks. While I certainly do not advocate any of

these positions, I submit that the differences between contemporary America and ancient Athens, as well as between Isocrates and me, are not sufficient grounds for dismissing the contemporary applicability of Isocrates' lessons and pedagogical strategies altogether. Instead, I maintain that Isocrates' works *can* be reread and strategically adapted to the twenty-first century writing classroom despite what we recognize as these appalling flaws in his thinking.

I also want to acknowledge the fact that I have not read Isocrates' texts in the original Greek, but only in their English translations.[3] By doing so, I recognize that I have opened myself up to being susceptible to the particular proclivities of the ideologically situated translations employed by the translators. For example, George Norlin repeatedly translates Isocrates' use of the Greek word for "philosophy" as "rhetoric" (a word that was never used by Isocrates himself), or puts the word philosophy in quotation marks to indicate that when Isocrates was writing the word had "no definite association with speculative or abstract thought, signifying only a lover of wisdom or a seeker after the cultivated life" (1:xxvii). However, as I am interested in rereading Isocrates' texts in a contemporary context, not in recovering him "unblemished" from the historical past, I do not feel that I have compromised my scholarly endeavor by reading the texts in modern English translations.

Introduction

A Call For Isocratean, Context-Driven, Public Performances

Our return to Greece, our spontaneous renewal of this influence, does not mean that by acknowledging the timeless and ever-present intellectual greatness of the Greeks, we have given them an authority over us which, because it is independent of our own destiny, is fixed and unchallengeable. On the contrary: we always return to Greece because it fulfils some need of our own life, although that need may be very different at different epochs.
—Werner Jaeger, *Paideia I*

When anyone elects to speak or write discourses which are worthy of praise and honor, it is not conceivable that he will support causes which are unjust or petty or devoted to private quarrels, and not rather those which are great and honorable, devoted to the welfare of man and our common good.
—Isocrates, *Antidosis*

We must help our students, and our fellow citizens, to engage in a rhetorical process that can collectively generate trustworthy knowledge and beliefs conducive to the common good. Perhaps a way to begin the rhetorical process would be to aver provocatively that we intend to make our students better people, that we believe education should develop civic virtue.
—Patricia Bizzell, "Beyond Anti-Foundationalism"

My rereading and renewal of Isocrates in this dissertation is meant to challenge scholars and practitioners of college writing instruction to restore a rhetorical emphasis on discourse production as active, public participation in the negotiation of social and cultural issues and in decision-making processes that have as their goal a more just society. It is time, I will argue, that we take student writers and student writing out of the walls of the academy and into the public sphere. I want to suggest that the most promising way to help our students become active problem-solvers and informed participants in the communities in which they live and work—while still meeting the public's continued insistence on a course that teaches students how to write effectively—is to recreate a rhetorical mode of context-driven public performance, specifically the

practical social and political rhetoric of a (re)new(ed) civic discourse based on the classical pedagogy of Isocrates.[1] By civic discourse, I mean *all* the ways of conveying and interpreting ideas relating to everyday life, including speaking, seeing, listening, reading, and writing. I understand civic discourse to be an *action*,[2] a means of construction, a language that implements, regulates, and attempts to justify public practices while remaining flexible enough to undergo modifications as audiences and situations change. By public, I mean members of a community (which may or may not be constituted by a geographical space) who have the ability to form judgments about actions that affect all members of that community as well as the ability to articulate their opinions effectively and to thereby influence the judgments of others. By community, I mean those who provisionally share experiences and/or discursive spaces, a collection of people with necessarily competing beliefs and practices who understand the social nature of power and the need to confront one another continuously, to arrive at contextualized and timely decisions, and to act upon these decisions without ever necessarily achieving consensus and with the understanding that future actions, although they will be influenced by previous experiences and conclusions, should always be considered in the new context and in a forum in which numerous competing viewpoints have a chance to be expressed. The public exchange of opinions, that is, should be an occasion for any conflicting parties to speak, not a means of silencing diverse expressions. Such rhetorical interchanges make contending parties "into a community because they have for that particular situation formed a common identity by their public deliberation" (Kasteley 236-237).[3] With these definitions in mind, the course I envision would incorporate many of the innovative practices of existing revisionary movements while adding and emphasizing the (re)new(ed) Isocratean concepts of practical public performances and engaged civic judgments in order to reconceive the writing classroom as a public space and student writers as members of various provisional communities who can have overt social or political objectives for writing and who will have vested interests in attempting

to bring about far-reaching changes through deliberative, public discursive performances.[4]

The ubiquitous, modern first-year composition course in America can trace its inception to the Harvard freshman writing course of the late nineteenth century, a remedial course developed in response to a public outcry that college freshmen could not write well enough to meet expected social and business standards of literacy and correctness. The task of training students to produce error-free and mechanically correct prose established in Harvard's "English A" generally has been the foremost guiding principle of the freshman composition course and its accompanying handbook industry in America ever since.[5] This is not to say, however, that this dominant pedagogical practice, which has come to be known as "current-traditional rhetoric,"[6] has not gone unchallenged by theorists and practitioners alike. Certainly there have always been pockets of resistance to this restrictive paradigm, the most noticeable and effective of which have emerged in the past forty years or so. Since the 1960s, as Erika Lindemann triumphantly reminds us, composition teachers "have met challenges to reconceive [their] teaching for new populations of students, among them basic writers, students of diverse cultures and first languages, and undergraduates who seek advanced training in writing for the professions" (178). While college writing instructors and composition theorists undoubtedly deserve to be commended for meeting these and other challenges and for loosening the hold of the restrictive practices of current-traditional rhetoric in college writing classrooms, I would argue with Ray Wallace, Alan Jackson, and Susan Wallace that "we, as writing teachers, have not achieved as much as we thought we would" (xi), and we also have incorporated various "new and proven" techniques "with little or no real introspection as to what we are actually producing" (xii). I also agree with Carolyn Matalene that the admirable positions, intentions, and visions of rhetoric and composition scholars "do not always retain such complexity and inclusiveness when they are realized in book adoptions and then carried out by teaching staffs" (180)—many of which do *not*

include anyone professionally trained in (or even particularly interested in) rhetoric and composition.[7] Although the history of various challenges to the current-traditional archetype has been told by several historians before me—including Susan Miller, Kathleen Welch, Sharon Crowley, Robert Connors, and James Berlin, to name a few— this history of revisions to the current-traditional paradigm is worth repeating briefly here before I introduce my case for why these revisionary pedagogical theories ought to be supplemented and improved upon for twenty-first century writing courses by incorporating a (re)new(ed) Isocratean rhetorical emphasis on contextualized, public discursive performances.

One of the first revisions to have a significant impact on the efforts to challenge the current-traditional paradigm in the latter part of the twentieth century came from "writing-as-process" theorists. Echoing Donald Murray's "famous call to educational arms" (McComiskey, "Post" 37) in his 1972 essay "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product," process theorists shifted their pedagogical emphasis from the finished, written product to the activity of writing itself and from "reader-centered" to "writer-centered" prose. One writing-as-process group, which James Berlin has labeled the "expressionists,"[8] emphasizes writing as a way of discovering one's "true" self rather than simply presenting what the current-traditionalists assume to be an already existing reality (i.e., simply transforming extant ideas into written symbols). This group includes such early practitioners as Murray, Ken Macrorie, Ann Berthoff, and Peter Elbow. "Cognitive rhetoric" also emerged out of the initial process movement (see, for example, Janet Emig's hallmark work *The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders*). The cognitivists (Emig, Linda Flower, and John Hayes, among others) use such strategies as "think-aloud protocols" to try to discover how "real writers" write and attempt to map the stages of the writing process by utilizing scientific studies about the workings of the human mind.

In the 1960s, process theories quickly gained favor among practitioners who were eager to "liberate" and motivate students by allowing them to write about their personal experiences as well as those who were eager to find something "teachable" in writing other than grammar and mechanics. According to Richard Ohmann, "most colleges revised their freshman courses once or more in the late sixties, toward what teachers saw as freedom and relevance" (*English* 141), both of which appeared most often as attempts to "empower" the individual student. However, partially as a response to renewed, societal complaints about the poor literacy skills demonstrated by college students (e.g., the fervor generated by the *Newsweek* article published in the late 1970s entitled "Why Johnny Can't Write")[9] and partially due to concerns with class sizes, grading, and teachability, process theory in practice often has had a tendency to overlook the broader political consequences of writing beyond individual self-reflection and to become entrenched in the academic culture as a somewhat torpid "prewrite-draft-revise" drill, an approach nearly as mechanized and concerned with correctness and getting existing ideas down on paper in a "proper" format and style as its "select-narrow-amplify" current-traditional predecessor.[10] In other words, what unfortunately happened, as Lester Faigley points out, is that "just as in the larger culture where the counterculture art, music, and dress of the 1960s were soon coopted and commodified, the radical beginnings of the process movement were also domesticated" (225). John Clifford and Elizabeth Ervin also argue that the process movement's democratic impulses "once brimming with liberatory potential, have become domesticated by inertia and routine" (197), so that process pedagogy in practice often serves as just another way to ensure that students (like "Johnny") get their writing done "correctly."

The early process theorists' somewhat romantic notions of the writer as a solitary artist whose mission was to be "true" to himself were challenged in later decades by the "social constructionists." The social constructionists argue that the process of writing is always already social and that the writer is a social construct who can never "discover"

her "true self" because she is a conglomeration of socially interpellated selves.[11] Out of the social constructionist movement grew the "academic discourse" movement. The advocates of "academic discourse" began to describe the pervasive composition course as a necessary and empowering introduction to the "academic discourse community." Mastery of the conventions of this community, they speculated, would enable students to succeed in future college courses and, eventually, on the job market.[12] For example, in his highly influential essay "Inventing the University," David Bartholomae argues that "the student has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community" (134). Such positivistic notions of language acquisition and adaptation and their accompanying promotion of a privileged and overgeneralized "academic" or "professional" discourse were challenged in turn by the "critical pedagogues," a group highly influenced by Marxist theory and the liberatory pedagogy of Paulo Freire.

Some critical pedagogues, like John Trimbur and Greg Myers, are highly suspicious of social constructionist notions of community as consensus, or what Jean-François Lyotard has categorized as the "terror" of the majority; while others, such as Berlin and Susan Jarratt, argue that the social constructionists fail to recognize how the student-as-author is falsely constructed and in need of being liberated. The critical pedagogues typically promote courses in "cultural studies" and are sometimes condemned for spending the majority of their time teaching discourse interpretation and social analysis rather than discourse production, that is, for forgetting that they are supposed to be teaching writing in addition to performing critical readings. Most recently, postmodernist rhetorics have called into question the unity and agency of the speaking subject as well as the very possibility of persuasion or communication, let alone liberation or empowerment, and some have even gone so far as to suggest doing away with the freshman writing requirement altogether.[13]

While each of these movements has its supporters and opponents, its successes and its shortcomings, and while each has contributed to the gradual reduction of predominately current-traditional first-year writing programs, I believe they finally fall short of instituting the kinds of active engagement in public discursive performances that a (re)new(ed) Isocratean rhetoric could provide. What is at stake, therefore, in renewing an Isocratean version of discourse instruction is a broadening of students' horizons beyond their need to succeed in school, get a job, make money, stay out of trouble with the law, and be discerning consumers. It is time, I am suggesting, for writing instructors to try to reinvigorate the political and social activities of our students as citizen subjects and to alter the current conception of public action as meaning "action taken as a worker or a professional, as an expert or as someone who is 'just following orders'" (Brown 35)[14] and the perception of "individual" opinions as merely subjective "personal" tastes. What we need to do is to renew an Isocratean social definition of opinions as constituting informed judgments achieved through public deliberations. I agree with Alan Kennedy that "there is a kind of writing instruction, and a related conception of writing, that could assist us in recovering a belief that we can reshape our public sphere. Indeed," he continues, "I would regard that as the primary political responsibility of a writing pedagogy. If writing is seen as correct usage, if it is seen as the five paragraph theme (a predetermined form to be filled), if it is seen as the recorder of knowledge, if it is seen in any other way than as social agency, then writing cannot be political" (33).

A (re)new(ed) Isocratean rhetoric would take seriously its political responsibility, and it therefore would encourage students to see that the discourses they produce *can* and *do* have social, material, and political impacts on their lives and the lives of those around them on a significant scale—whether this discursive product is an office memo, a legal contract, a church or club newsletter, or a letter to the editor, the local school board, or the planning commission—and that they can be producers of discourse that *matters* rather than simply consumers or critics of others' already-produced discourses. An Isocratean

approach to writing instruction would therefore be "interested less in providing 'skills' for individuals or 'personal expression' (finding one's 'voice') than in the positions represented by [citizen] subjects and the consequences for which they are accountable in terms of their relation to the so-called general interest and contesting conceptions of that interest" (Katz 213). Such aims, I will argue, have less chance of being attained in courses that focus on critical consumption, knowledge acquisition, professional accreditation, and/or technical competencies as their main objective(s) and that assign decontextualized textbook articles and sections from grammar handbooks as their class reading than in a class designed upon the (re)new(ed) Isocratean principles I will be outlining here.

While I may be the first to turn primarily to Isocrates as a guiding model for reformation of the ubiquitous composition class, as I stated earlier, I certainly am not the first to criticize the restrictive nature of the freshman writing course as it was designed in the late-nineteenth century, nor the first to lobby for a reexamination and reorganization of the pedagogical methods employed by American college and university writing instructors in the course. In fact, calls to change or improve the freshman composition course are almost as old as the required course itself. Undoubtedly, few practitioners or theorists have been entirely satisfied with the narrowly-conceived "current-traditional" conception of composition as a course merely meant to teach students the rules of grammar, paragraph development, and "superficial correctness." And, like me, several writing instructors have sought to find an alternative conception in the rhetorical techniques employed in the classical past.

Early Twentieth-Century Calls for a Return to Rhetoric

One of the first twentieth-century pedagogues to make a call to a return to a rhetoric of public service was Fred Newton Scott, who became a Professor of Rhetoric at the University of Michigan in 1901 and who "insisted on retaining the word [rhetoric] in

his title throughout his career," although it was "out of favor in the new century" (Kitzhaber 70) among the newly-founded departments of English language and literature. Scott's influence unarguably impacted his graduate students (including Gertrude S. Buck and Sterling A. Leonard) and affected their subsequent teaching, and his textbooks and edited volumes offered an alternative choice for teachers dissatisfied with the perfunctory exercises in grammar and paragraph arrangement offered by most of the other college writing handbooks of the time. However, his initially promising attempt to broaden the scope of composition instruction by including a more extensive conception of rhetoric and public discourse was discarded by most English departments and their writing programs in favor of the narrower conception of writing instruction sanctioned by the nationally influential Harvard curriculum. As a result, most college writing instruction in the early twentieth century continued to be "for all practical purposes, little more than instruction in grammar and the mechanics of writing, motivated almost solely by the ideal of superficial correctness" (Kitzhaber 73). The next major challenges to the current-traditional paradigm were not made until the second half of the twentieth century, as I already mentioned. After Scott, the next pedagogue to make a conspicuous appeal for a revival of the wide-ranging conception of classical rhetoric was Edward P. J. Corbett in the 1960s.

Corbett's rhetorical theory, as set out in his highly regarded textbook *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (first published in 1965 and now in its fourth edition), in many ways "revitalized the tradition, showing it to be a subtle and powerful tool for contemporary writers" (Zimmerman 108). Since Corbett's rhetorical stance is primarily Aristotelian, not Isocratean, his text foregrounds the three modes of appeal (logos, pathos, and ethos) and privileges a logical argumentation strategy. Like me, Corbett sought to reintroduce classical rhetorical principles into the writing course because, in Zimmerman's estimation, he felt that they would "foster ethical as well as intellectual development" and that the classical precepts should be emphasized because they attended

"not only to the acquisition of knowledge but also to the processes of learning and living, simultaneously preparing students for both the composition of essays and interaction with others in the public sphere" (Zimmerman 109). Although Corbett initially thought that he was echoing Aristotle's praise of rhetoric as a means of public involvement, he realized late in life that it was "not Aristotle's tradition" ("Ethical" 262) that he was advocating after all, but Isocrates', since it was principally Isocrates who insisted that the rhetorical exercises and moral principles learned and practiced in his classroom should be put to use immediately in the public sphere by his students.

Like Isocrates and me, Corbett hoped that training students to produce civic and moral discourses addressed to particular audiences in context-specific situations might be a way of overcoming the rule-bound and morally neutral handbook tradition. However, because Corbett privileged the logical and systematic rhetoric of Aristotle early in his career, and dismissed Isocrates as "garrulous," "sanctimonious," and "soporifically banal" ("Isocrates'" 275), his lessons in classical precepts were unfortunately susceptible to being reduced to a mechanistic emphasis on the formal propriety of organization and style as dictated by the rules of logic. Unlike Isocratean rhetoric, which is always embedded in public activity, Aristotelian rhetoric "is almost entirely an analytical, academic undertaking" that has "no connection with the speaker's lived life" and therefore it primarily teaches "analysis, not performance" (Neel, *Aristotle* 138, 166, 176). Consequently, although it does offer composition instructors and students a way to move beyond the limited examination and production of formal textual features by emphasizing audience and context, because it is principally a reflective and critical discourse rather than an active and productive discourse, Corbett's adapted Aristotelian rhetoric finally falls short as a means of breaking through the formulaic strategies of rhetorical *technai* or promoting active student engagement in both the production and distribution of civic discourse—as has his text thus far.[15]

Following Corbett, a number of other composition instructors also sought to differentiate their theories from what they perceived as the limited and narrowly functional techniques of current-traditional rhetoric, particularly within the last thirty to forty years, as I mentioned at the beginning of this Introduction.[16] These teachers and scholars have argued compellingly that composition instruction needs to move beyond the confines of writing as an academic exercise, beyond an emphasis on correctness, clarity, and form, and should not regard composition as a second-class subject in departments of English where it is often belittled in comparison to the aesthetic appreciation or critical interpretation of vernacular literature. Since that time, as I briefly outlined earlier, some of the major groups that have attempted to overcome or augment the remedial status and current-traditional practices of American college writing classrooms are the process theorists (including the cognitivists and the expressivists), the social-epistemics, the poststructuralists and postmodernists, and others, like Scott, Corbett, and me, who have sought to renew and revive some of the classical rhetorical lessons of ancient Greece and Rome.[17] I will now examine in further detail a few of the current revisionary theoretical approaches that are held in high regard by writing program administrators and writing teachers and are being implemented in college writing classrooms throughout the country: teaching composition as a way of introducing students to the "academic discourse community," as a way of encouraging them to achieve "critical consciousness," or as a way of engaging them in "service learning" projects. My intention is to demonstrate that these current pedagogical practices, while able to accomplish some of the goals of a (re)new(ed) Isocratean curriculum, finally fall short of achieving a truly radical, politically and socially significant revision of writing instruction in the American academy.

"Critical Consciousness"

Composition courses that focus on helping students cultivate "critical consciousness" are concerned with "the ways social formations and practices shape consciousness, and [how] this shaping is mediated by language and situated in concrete historical conditions" (Berlin, "Composition Studies" 391). I do not want to suggest here that a "critical consciousness" approach to teaching reading and writing is not fulfilling its promise to make students into critical readers who can identify their historical- and social-constructedness, who can critique the texts that are implicated in those constructions, and who can "*talk* about the connections among cultural process, class relations, sexual divisions, racial structurings, and age dependencies" (Trimbur, "Cultural" 10, emphasis added). What I am arguing is that such an approach, because it keeps "the focus on the *text* as an inhabited subjective form" (Trimbur, "Cultural" 12, emphasis added), does not appear to be fulfilling its promise to empower students to use their own writing to *act* publicly "in frankly political directions" (Trimbur, "Cultural" 5) as citizen subjects. As Flower explains, "textual literacy focuses on textuality rather than on intellectual action or social involvement" (282). Therefore, I would argue with Wells, that such an approach to teaching literacy "mortgages composition to the analytic bias of such study, rather than encouraging the production of alternatives" (339).[18] What often happens in such courses is that "teachers of composition may assume that the reading for the course can be liberating while the formal instruction in the rules of correct composition remains the same" (J. Miller 281). Such assumptions result in "inadvertently reinforcing in teaching rules of correct composition the things they are in the thematic side of their teaching trying to put into question" (J. Miller 281), which then creates a classroom situation in which the texts the *students* are producing become simply formal writing assignments completely separated from the liberatory practice of their reading. Consequently, "even at best," such writing classes "seldom educate graduates who [can] be expected to address a congressman effectively, in speech or writing, or to

write a plausible letter to a school superintendent urging an improved high-school curriculum" (Booth 60).

If we are genuinely interested in liberating and empowering our students, we cannot let reading's critical functions overpower writing's productive functions;[19] that is, we need to realize that "critical consciousness alone is not sufficient for citizens to participate in the formulation and reformulation of egalitarian power structures" (McComiskey, *Gorgias* 117). If we genuinely want to "stop teaching students to underwrite the university," we will have "to stop demanding written material which can be easily gathered and assessed" and instead "teach *writing* [and not just reading] as an event in which knowledge and form [are] preserved or resisted and changed" (Hurlbert and Blitz 7, emphasis added). In addition, if we stop assigning anthologized readings and if we allow our students to choose their own topics and their own reading materials while still under our guidance as more experienced readers and writers, we may be able to overcome the stigma of "critical consciousness" pedagogy being another name for writing teachers "force-feeding a particular politics down students' throats" (Kaufer and Dunmire 226), and we may be able to turn student writing into active and engaged cultural involvement rather than something that is taught as "a sterile activity that has no scalability beyond the classroom" (Kaufer and Dunmire 226).[20]

When writing is presented to our students as a sterile activity, as the uninteresting but necessary "work" of the class as opposed to reading and discussion which are presented as the "liberatory" and pleasurable parts of the course, they fail to learn that writing always occurs in specific historical moments, in contingent contexts, and in provisional relations with others, that it *has* to be scalable and *kairotic*, that it *cannot* be reduced to a sterile or generalized process, and that it *does* have important applications beyond the classroom. What I am suggesting is that in classes that are focused on the principles of critical consumption our students may be influenced individually by the assigned readings and subsequent class discussions, and in that way become better

citizens, but they are not being given real opportunities to influence others with their own discursive performances or to engage in the same kinds of productive and critical discussions about their *own* writing. A class based on the communal civic rhetoric of Isocrates would remedy that failure because it would enable teachers to "imagine writing assignments that take students beyond the critical essay of cultural analysis and critique into the rhetoric of public discourse," and it would help writing instructors picture students as "cultural producers" rather than just "cultural consumers" (George and Trimbur 86) by emphasizing the public production, analysis, and distribution of new *student* discourses as much as, if not more than, the critique of existing "professional" ones.

As Isocrates knew, criticism is only the starting point for public action. It was his hope that even if a person lacked "the ability to make proper use of [discourse] at the appropriate time, to observe the right sentiment about [it] in each instance, and to set [it] forth in a finished phrase," something he considered to be a "peculiar gift of the wise" (*Panegyricus* 9-10), that if she[21] were of "honest character," she would still make an effort to articulate her version of the "truth" (in however ungifted a manner) and present it as a basis for social action; that is, she would make the connection between her personal choices and decisions and the public's concerns, and she would take responsibility for the social, material, and political consequences of her discursive participation. By asking our students to do the same, we can hope with Isocrates that "those who most apply their minds to [the specific occasions of their discursive performances] and are able to discern the consequences which for the most part grow out of them, will most often meet these occasions in the right way" (*Antidosis* 184) and will thus help all of us enjoy a more just society. I agree with Jeff Rice's Isocratean sentiment that addressing the inadequacy of public engagement in American life through the agency of writing done by students in their college years may in fact represent "our 'last best chance' to initiate a broad, life-long civic engagement on the part of United States

citizens" (3). I also agree with Kelly Lowe that the first-year writing course must "go beyond the ephemeral ideal that students can, in fifteen weeks, confront their own racist, sexist, classist, imperialist, and capitalist ideological preconceptions while at the same time learn the skills to help them eventually become better writers of lab reports, art history essays, business letters, case studies, essay exams, [etc.]" (18), the latter half of which is the purpose of courses centered on teaching students the conventions of "academic discourse."

"Academic Discourse"

Proponents of the "academic discourse" approach to teaching writing argue alongside Bartholomae that "the student has to learn to speak our language [academic discourse], to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community" (589). They explain that "writing (and the thinking that accompanies it)" are the "primary and necessary vehicle for practicing the ways of organizing and presenting ideas that are most appropriate to a particular subject area" (Langer 71). By defining writing as the normative process of various "academic discourse communities" or subject-matter areas, advocates of this pedagogical strategy seem to suggest that writing cannot be taught to students outside of the context of some sort of disciplinary subject matter or content. A similar attitude exists among those who view the "written expression of the 'material' of the course as a kind of adjunct to the 'real' business of education" or as "a means of *demonstrating* knowledge, not *acquiring* it" (Russell, *Writing* 5-6, emphasis added). In addition, the contemporary research university's emphasis on disciplinary divisions and the research ideal have "narrowed the possibilities for written discourse in the modern curriculum by casting suspicion on genres that [are] not 'academic,' which is to say research-oriented [and, I would add, print-based]" (Russell, *Writing* 74). The problem with placing such restrictions on the possibilities of

writing is that "finding classroom genres that allow both disciplinary and personal or civic involvement is difficult" (Russell, "Where" 282) because much of the discourse produced and distributed by those within research universities has effectively disengaged itself from the "popular" discourse of the public political community and has become "highly specialized (if not arcane) and abstract" (Kecht 2). Although "writing in the disciplines" programs may offer students some opportunities to distribute their writing beyond the classroom (to faculty members from other institutions, to professionals in the field, etc.) and "writing across the curriculum" programs may allow discussion and criticism of student writing to occur in an interdisciplinary context, most of the time when students are being asked to write "academic discourse," they are generally expected to produce an overly generalized "research paper" or "term paper" that has limited potential to prompt any civic actions or to allow the student writers to engage in public deliberations about events and decisions that will affect their non-academic, everyday lives and the lives of diverse others in their provisional communities.

The standard practice of asking students to write "research papers" or "academic essays" results from limiting the generic scope of "academic discourse." Unfortunately, too many advocates of this pedagogical technique have failed to attend to Bartholomae's comment that instead of learning "the" language of our academic community, he really meant that students need to learn "the *various* discourses of our community" (589). The tendency to overlook the rhetorical importance of this clarification has caused many first-year writing instructors to act as if "the academic discourse community" is "such a stable entity that one can define our teaching problem in terms of how to get student writing to approximate a set of well-known and accepted academic models" (Bizzell, "Beyond" 373). Perhaps, as James McDonald argues, it was the "service function of the freshman English course, to teach students academic prose for all departments in the university" that "necessitated the fiction of the generic academic essay" (142). Such a dispassionate approach to teaching writing allows instructors to avoid teaching students to be conscious

of the fact that "the struggle that inheres in academic discourse is not merely over neutral academic conventions but for power, the power to make meaning and interpret experience" (Clifford 225). Perhaps, as Matalene suggests, this is a strategic neglect and "our efforts to instill in our students the specific conventions and values associated with academic discourse [are] designed more to legitimate our own work and our status in the larger society than to teach our students knowledge and skills that will enable them to function as productive members of society" (181). Unfortunately, this choice has contributed to what I would argue with Matalene is a "crisis of citizenship, legitimation, and political obligation" (189) among ourselves and our students.

On the other hand, I do think it would be fair to say that first-year composition as it is currently configured does serve a valuable socialization function in higher education because it is often the one common experience shared by the majority of students and because the number of students in each class generally is kept fairly small (which allows students to get to know each other and their teacher better than in the large lecture classes that make up much of the rest of an undergraduate curriculum, especially in the first two years).[22] However, I do not believe we can be as confident that the present structures of first-year writing courses in departments of English really do prepare students sufficiently for their future academic writing projects, as supporters of introducing student writers to "academic discourse" conventions typically claim. Unfortunately, the evidence suggests, in fact, that we often fall short of preparing our students for subsequent writing assignments. Instead, "the view widely held by students about their first-year writing classes is often true: the writing they do there takes the form of exercises, not real academic projects, and it usually has little relation to the writing they are required to do in their other classes" (Cooper and Holzman 49). This is especially the case when "the requirements and expectations of the English class are too different from what they encounter in the rest of their experience," because in such cases students "quickly decide that what they learn in English is irrelevant to the rest of their writing" (Applebee,

"Problems" 98). It is worth mentioning here, however, that many writing in the disciplines and writing across the curriculum programs have, as one of their aims, the goal of refuting and remedying the claim and/or practice that writing in first-year courses has little relation to the writing students will be required to produce in future classes.

I also want to be clear that I am not suggesting that our first-year writing courses fail to help students adjust to the rigors of higher education or fail to provide them with valuable analytical and technical skills or even that they fail altogether to provide them with some strategies for tackling other academic writing assignments. What I am suggesting is that the "academic discourse" approach to writing instruction disregards the fact that teaching writing is "a high stakes enterprise with implications not only for students' academic and professional success—important as those are—but also for the health of participatory democracy" (A. George 97). In fact, perhaps Richard Ohmann is right when he remarks that "the trouble with composition courses is less often in the substance of what is taught than in the intellectual framework provided for that substance, and in the motivation offered for mastering it" ("In Lieu" 305-306). If our practices of teaching writing lead students to believe "that their education [is] nothing more than a means to funnel them in to appropriate middle-class jobs," it cannot enable them "to either enlarge the private realm or challenge the public" (A. George 103). That is why I am suggesting that it may be time to stop insisting that the primary value of our courses is that we train our students in the techniques necessary for success on their future academic and professional writing requirements, and that we instead should consider restructuring the first-year writing requirement into an introductory course in rhetoric and civic discourse, a course that both incorporates and goes beyond the subject-matter and analysis-based instruction prevalent in many of our current programs. This rhetorical classroom would not neglect to provide students with communication skills that would prepare them for work; however, in its new configuration as a class modeled on Isocrates, this course would become more like a laboratory for practicing contextualized rhetorical

performances or a workshop where students and teachers work together to discover how to achieve effective discursive performances in specific, everyday situations, not just in the specialized discourses of the academy or the professional workplace. Such a course would aim to prepare students not only to be critical readers and successful employees but also active and engaged public citizens by requiring them to produce and distribute discursive performances that would "create linkages outside the university in ways that engage the pedagogical force of the entire culture" (Giroux 86).

"Service Learning"

Sending student writers outside of the classroom to create linkages with the non-academic community is one aim of the "service learning" branch of composition pedagogy. According to Donald Daiker, the "central fact" of the "new geography" of twenty-first century composition is that the "most exciting things" are happening "outside and away from the college classroom. Or to put it another way, the college classroom is in the process of expanding to include segments of the larger community, both on and off campus" (2). Ostensibly, "service learning" programs all "attempt to connect the classroom to the community in a way that encourages experiential learning on the part of the students. The goals of such programs are to help students understand the connection of learning to life, to stimulate students' social consciences, and to help establish writing as a social action" (McLeod and Miraglia 9). According to anecdotal evidence, students and teachers involved in "service learning" composition programs report feeling "a greater sense of purpose and meaning in the belief that their work will have tangible results in the lives of others" as well as "a greater sense of responsibility and accountability," since "'success' in community-based work is not an abstract or complex concept but rather a 'bottom line' for a real audience" (Adler-Kassner et al 2, 6). In such writing environments, students are also "learning that they can use their knowledge not only to get jobs for themselves but also to help others" (Herzberg, "Community" 58) and

are being given "opportunities to be makers of meaning and agents for change" (Arca 134). Clearly such courses are designed to accomplish many of the same goals of what I have been calling a (re)new(ed) Isocratean civic rhetoric.

However, as Laura Julier points out, "[a]lthough it might seem at first that teachers of writing courses who make use of a service learning pedagogy or a community-service component are among those who view writing as a system of social actions" and who view writing instruction as way to "help students achieve a public purpose (e.g. moving readers to an informed judgment, encouraging wise action) and to develop the qualities of character and mind and the powers of language needed for public discourse" (140), in fact there are many service learning programs, courses, and teachers whose "curricular and pedagogical choices" focus on autobiographic and introspective pieces and foreground a private purpose for writing (Julier 140). As Herzberg explains, "It is all too easy to ask students to write journal entries and reaction papers, to assign narratives and exhort confessions and let it go at that" ("Community" 59). In such cases, when "community service efforts are not structured to raise the questions that result in critical analysis of the issues," then students are not involved in education as social change but in "charity" (Stroud qtd. in Herzberg, "Community" 58-59). In other words, when "service learning" writing is practiced as nothing more than a voluntary, well-meaning, service-assistance gesture or a one-way form of episodic outreach, when it forgets to "[relate] theory to practice, [provide] active learning opportunities, and [promote] interdisciplinary work" (Bringle et al 11), it fails to develop students fully as citizen subjects or to interest them in engaging in public actions and public discursive performances that go beyond a "feel good" sense of volunteerism, especially when such courses and community engagement opportunities last only one semester.

In contrast, a (re)new(ed) Isocratean course in civic rhetoric would engage students in recurring public discursive performances in a variety of provisional communities and would leave them with a sense that they had not just "helped out"

someone (or several someones) less fortunate than themselves, but would engage them in acts of public deliberation that would impact their everyday lives. The course I am envisioning would not prevent students from writing about their personal experiences, but it would not limit student writing to experiential narratives composed primarily to prove to the instructor that the students have indeed had their "eyes opened" to the plight of the needy through their participation in a community service project. In addition, while students in an (re)new(ed) Isocratean course on civic rhetoric might choose to compose an informational brochure or a newsletter for one of their provisional discourse communities (including a charitable organization or an outreach program), they would mainly be asked to perform writing tasks that would engage them in communal discussions and negotiations, allow them to take responsibility for their choices and their judgments, require them to listen respectfully to others' opinions, encourage them to consider the viability of divergent norms and conventions, stimulate them to question received "truths," and prompt them to seek constantly for new ways to put their discourses into action for the "general good."

Why Isocrates?

First of all, a (re)new(ed) Isocratean rhetoric would address the public's concerns about student literacy not by inculcating an uncritical and severely overgeneralized standard of correctness or touting the supposedly universal appropriateness and effectiveness of "Standard Written English" or "academic discourse," but by emphasizing audience expectations, diverse discourse conventions, and the writer's credibility or ethos.[23] Students will be taught and will experience firsthand that failure to meet audience expectations of "literate" discourse may result in inaction or outright dismissal of their rhetorical performances; therefore, they should be motivated to implement or perform to the contextually appropriate local standards or "rules of thumb" when necessary to achieve notice and, potentially, success.[24] Students will also be encouraged

to see every act of writing as "an attempt to change an audience," which means that "the ethical question that must intersect that attempt pertains to the ultimate goal of that action" (Porter 68) and, therefore, the writer must be willing to accept responsibility for the ultimate consequences of her acts of writing. Under this conception of writing, the writing process no longer would be conceived of as an act of *producing* something that serves primarily as a social, academic, or professional credential, but as an act of *doing* something,[25] that is, an act of formulating *and* distributing public opinions for which the writer must accept the political, social, and material consequences. Promoting a particular decision or judgment and being responsible for changing public opinions and actions through such public discursive performances will help student writers see that their writing has individual consequences for them beyond the attainment or failure to attain a sought-after grade or job, as well as social consequences in the various provisional communities of which they are a part, which leads me to my next point.

A course in Isocratean civic writing will be by definition a social course since students will be writing in and among various provisional communities and will be sharing their discourses with audiences both inside and outside the classroom. In addition, a course in civic discourse cannot help but also be a course in cultural studies. Students will necessarily have to consider their own personal histories and experiences and how their opinions and beliefs are affected by these experiences and their discursive habits as well as be familiar with how various past and present community events have been socially constructed and how these events have been affected by diverse historical, ideological, technological, material, economic, and literary forces if they wish to enter ably into the conversation, that is, if they wish to have their voices heard and acted upon.[26] They will also have to learn to make informed guesses about how their audiences will interpellate or construct them as speakers and/or writers based solely on their uses of discourse. Unlike many of our students, Isocrates did not conceive of individuals as distinct and separate from the larger social order, but as public entities whose ethical

characters were manifested through their actions and their discursive performances. As Isocrates knew, when one is attempting to promote the "common good," one must have respect for oneself as an individual *and* for the community, for unity *and* diversity. In a (re)new(ed) Isocratean classroom, therefore, our students will come to understand that, as writers, their audiences will most often have only their words by which to construct an opinion of them as worthy of their attention or not; that is, they can only manifest themselves as ethical or credible writers and citizens through effective discursive performances.

Although my emphasis so far has been on the written *product*, the *process* of discourse production will also be emphasized in a (re)new(ed) Isocratean classroom as students practice rhetorical invention exercises and offer each other constructive criticism and positive feedback during each instantiation of a discursive performance and as they reflect on the effects of and responses to their public performances and consider how to revise their writing, their opinions, or their actions for the next audience and the next performance. Finally, the course's emphasis on producing, analyzing, and distributing civic discourse should have a real impact outside the classroom and the walls of the academy as students produce deliberative discourses meant to be put to practical use in various communities, rather than merely to attain a grade or complete a social or professional credentialing process, particularly since the relative success of any assignment ideally will be judged in part by the reaction and response (or lack thereof) it receives from public audiences.[27]

Isocrates' pedagogy is an apt model for this type of discourse production because, for Isocrates, "writing was not a skill mastered as a technical craft. For Isocrates, writing was a central part of a process of social knowledge and language interaction" (Enos, "Ancient" 31). This is why I believe we should attempt to renew and to implement a similar conception of writing instruction in our twenty-first century composition classrooms. In fact, I would suggest that another legacy from the nineteenth-century

American academy places composition instructors in a unique position to augment the functional literacy, personal expression, cultural critique, and literary appreciation taught in most college writing courses today. As Elizabethada Wright and Michael Halloran point out, "'composition' in the sense of a course in the writing of silent prose, was probably the sole common denominator in American colleges by the close of the nineteenth century" (217). This common denominator remains widespread in American colleges and universities today; therefore, as composition instructors, we have the potential to influence and interact with nearly all degree-seeking students in higher education. We occupy a position that Berlin classifies as "a special role in the democratic educational mission" whose influence "always extends far beyond its own hallways" (*Rhetorics, Poetics* 54)—a position of influence for which Isocrates is the ideal example. For this reason, the first-year writing classroom, and, as public discourse becomes increasingly digitized, particularly the internetworked electronic writing space, is the paradigmatic venue for implementing a (re)new(ed) Isocratean model of civic discourse.

Even though he was faced with some of the same problems we encounter today, including the decline of civic-minded public discourse and the elevation of privatized individual interests over broader community concerns, Isocrates was dedicated to training public citizens who could seize upon *kairotic* opportunities to create changes in the social, political, and material conditions of their various provisional communities through public discursive performances. In contrast, as Halloran observes, "rather than providing leaders for the community," education in contemporary American society more often has become "an opportunity provided by the community for the individual" (262). I agree with Jarratt that one consequence of this change in emphasis has been that we educators "spend too little time helping [our] students learn how to argue about public issues— making the turn from the personal back to the public" ("Case" 121). As I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, many of the historical circumstances for this decline in the focus on public involvement in American college education in general, and the

composition course in particular, have been traced to the circumstances of the nineteenth-century, when "the very culture of rhetoric, which had always informed Western education, turned from a public, civic orientation meant to prepare leaders of church and state toward a more privatized, interiorized, and even artistic orientation meant to aid in self-development or career preparation in bureaucratic organizations" (Connors, *Composition-Rhetoric* 23).[28] These privatized and corporate orientations seemingly remain at the forefront of higher education today. So, while we may be equipping our students to become successful in their fields of expertise (the division of universities into separate "departments of experts" is, not incidentally, also a legacy of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century),[29] and while we may be making our students into better individuals (or even better individual citizens) by broadening the scope of their knowledge and challenging some of their unexamined notions about the world through various reading assignments and class discussions, I would argue that we are not equipping them sufficiently with the capacity to use their written discursive performances to become engaged *public* citizens with a sense of responsibility to each other, to those they have power over,[30] or to those in positions of power over them.

I want to reiterate that I am not contesting the importance of the role of higher education in job preparation nor am I dismissing future employability as one worthwhile motivation for teaching and learning writing. I understand the danger, as reformist pedagogue John Dewey cautioned in the early decades of the twentieth century, that "to divorce education from the immediate vocational world [is] merely to leave the world of business and power to flourish unexamined" (qtd. in Graff 166). Since we cannot and should not divorce education from the world of work, I agree with John Trimbur that it is time to "raise questions about how professional expertise is articulated to the social formation, how it undergoes rhetorical transformations, and how it might produce not only individual careers but also socially useful knowledge" ("Composition" 214). I also recognize that unlike most of Isocrates' elite and privileged students, who had "sufficient

means [to] take the time [to] embrace [the] cultivation of the mind" (*Antidosis* 304), "the attitudes of most working-class students toward college work is one of urgency. They want to acquire education credentials that they believe will lead to gainful employment and an improved lifestyle, and they want to do this as efficiently as possible" (Chaplin 99). However, I would like to suggest that as writing instructors we should strive to look beyond our students' urgency about obtaining gainful employment in order also to habituate them to the methods of critiquing and contributing to the social and political debates and negotiations that affect not only their employability and their status as employees at both the company level (such as employment contracts, vacation and benefits packages, working hours, dress codes, and policy statements) and the local, national, and global levels (such as minimum wage laws, workers' compensation, child care, social security, medical care, human rights, and environmental impact statements) but also their everyday lives as citizens. By doing so, we can hope that all of our students might have a chance to debate the utility and value of the existing social structures and institutions, invent and distribute informed choices, and take responsible public actions.

Unfortunately, as our assignments are presently designed, even when our students are asked to write about ethical or political issues of current consequence, because their critiques and their newly formed and articulated versions of the truth never get beyond the classroom, they are never given the chance to follow-up on or take responsibility for the public actions that might result from their expressed opinions and they become habituated to thinking that the choices they make and the decisions that they reach based on their school writing assignments do not really matter. However, an Isocratean approach to teaching writing would help our students see that writing *is* an occasion for making their ideas count in the world, rather than a mere professional, academic, or social credentialing process. So, rather than proclaiming that the value of our courses is that they are the gateway to academic success, job attainment, and middle-class society, I will argue that we should consider abiding by the educative principles of Isocrates, who

strove to teach his students to investigate thoroughly the complexities of everyday life and to become more articulate about them in order to have a chance to participate in debates and decisions about the formation of the future—both their own and society's.

In addition to calling for pedagogical revisions, I expect to contribute to the field of rhetoric and composition by responding to Richard Enos and Ann Blakeslee's claim that

> [o]ne of the most important tasks for historians and theoreticians of classical rhetoric is to introduce, refine, and possibly modify the heuristic and stylistic processes of classical rhetorical theory for the resolution of contemporary communication problems so that the benefits of rhetoric, which have been evident for centuries, can continue to be made apparent through scholarly research. (30)

I also intend to address the more general need for a revival of public discourse which, according to Michael Halloran, "the field of English composition has thus far failed to address" (246). Finally, I hope to show that Isocrates should not continue to be considered a minor rhetorical figure but rather that he deserves a place alongside the presently exalted classical triad of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. Although Isocrates has admittedly enjoyed something of a revival in recent years, it is my contention that the benefits of a refined and (re)new(ed) Isocratean pedagogy have not yet been examined or applied to the contemporary classroom in the detailed manner that I will be presenting here.

For example, Yun Lee Too's 1995 book *The Rhetoric of Identity in Isocrates* is "written first and foremost with classicists in mind" (9). She principally is interested in investigating "how Isocrates constructs a language within which he proceeds to fashion and authorize his own identity," examining "the making of identity" in the classical city of Athens in general, and articulating the ways in which "language can serve as a potent non-material basis for an individual's authority within society" (1). Although Too does

conclude by showing "the relevance of Isocrates' construction of pedagogy for contemporary discussions of education" (221), her discussion of contemporary applications of Isocratean pedagogy essentially is limited to an argument against the way that the proposed role of education in the formation of citizens is expressed in E. D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy* and Allan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind*.

Takis Poulakos, on the other hand, dedicates an entire chapter in his 1997 book *Speaking for the Polis* to an discussion of Isocrates' "innovative program in rhetorical education" (4) and the "relationship of [Isocrates'] version of rhetoric and his teaching of rhetoric to present rhetorical and pedagogical concerns" (5). However, the bulk of his study of Isocrates focuses on the "ways in which Isocrates changed the rhetorical tradition in order to rescue rhetoric from the ill repute it had received by the time it reached his day [. . .], how the changes he made might have provided satisfactory responses to some of Plato's attacks [. . .], and, most importantly, to show that the changes made were political" (3-4). So, while he shares an interest with me in "the ways in which Isocrates sought to construct his students' understanding of themselves [and] the responsibilities they had to themselves as thinkers, to their fellow citizens as human beings, to the tradition of rhetoric as speakers, to the history of their city as potential leaders, and, finally, to the polis as political beings," (xi), the majority of his text concentrates on studying Isocrates' students as historical figures, rather than on extrapolating the ways in which his lessons can be adapted for the modern composition classroom.

Kathleen Welch's 1999 text *Electric Rhetoric* may share the greatest number of similarities with my rereading of Isocrates as she, too, wishes to claim "Isocrates' positioning and agenda, his rhetoric and his *paideia*, as a powerful version of classical Greek rhetoric for the postmodern and after-postmodern world" (12) and to use what she has termed "Isocratic Sophistic theories" (7) to reposition "the humanities/posthumanities" as "a set of interrelated Sophistic logos studies that are

performative, democratic, and open to all kinds of symbol systems" (9). Welch, however, is mainly interested in theorizing video, television, and other forms of computerized and electronic literacy delivered through electronic "screens," studying new forms of "oralism/auralism" (26), and connecting Isocrates' "historical, Sophistical moment with the current massive transition into electronic forms of discourse" (25), while I focus my incorporation of Isocrates' pedagogical theories more broadly on what Welch might consider more "traditional" forms of written and spoken performances. Furthermore, unlike Welch, who claims that "Isocrates needs to be rescued from his placement as an educationist" (73), I would argue that it is specifically *because* Isocrates was, above all, an instructor[31] of written public discourse that a rereading and reconsideration of his texts is valuable to twenty-first century pedagogues.[32]

Isocrates the Educator

Isocrates had the seeming misfortune of being an educator in a time most often remembered for its intellectuals. As W. K. C. Guthrie claims in his *History of Greek Philosophy*, "the outstanding intellectual figures of Athens are Socrates, Plato and Aristotle" (7). In other words, although Isocrates and Plato were "strictly contemporaries," the fact that one is celebrated as "the great speculative thinker, the other, the great popular educator, of his century" (Jebb 38) has made a notable difference in their respective receptions by scholars and historians. While many would concede to Isocrates' status as the preeminent educator not only of Athens but also of "the whole ancient world" (Marrou 194) primarily because of his strong influence on the Romans (especially Cicero and Quintilian),[33] his apparent lack of "intellectualism" has caused him to be "regarded as inadequate by modern scholars" (Too 2).[34] In fact, Plato may have been the first to reduce Isocrates "to nothing more than a failed mind that once had promise" (Neel, *Plato* 25), so perhaps it is not surprising that modern scholars have continued to dismiss him as "not intellectually acute and venturesome" (Corbett,

"Isocrates'" 269) when compared to his contemporaries Plato and Aristotle. Furthermore, although he was a tremendously successful teacher, he was not a great public speaker (as was Cicero) and he never wrote a definitive treatise on his pedagogical system (as did Quintilian). What tends to be overlooked in such dismissive treatments, however, is the fact that "philosophically, pedagogically, and politically, the tasks Isocrates gave himself were unprecedented in the society in which he was born" (Schiappa, "Isocrates'" 60).

In addition to dismissing Isocrates' status as both an orator and an intellectual, most of the "recoveries" of rhetoric that have occurred in the past forty years or so have tended to concentrate either on Aristotle's history of rhetoric as a "supplement" to philosophy[35] or on the heretofore "hidden" history of Sophistic rhetoric.[36] These approaches, I would argue alongside Dilip Gaonkar, completely overlook the third tradition in rhetoric, "the tradition of civic humanism that stretches from Protagoras through Isocrates and Cicero to the Renaissance humanists" (201). At the turn of the twenty-first century, this civic rhetorical tradition, for which Isocrates is an exemplary spokesperson, largely continues to "remain occluded from [our] disciplinary consciousness" (Gaonkar 202). However, I would argue that this tradition of Isocratean civic engagement has been unfairly overlooked, especially in the field of rhetoric and composition where Isocrates has been "ignored as a major force in the tradition" (Vickers 438).[37] In a time when discourse production in American higher education has become principally a matter of "academic," "professional," and "literary" writing instruction (particularly in departments of English), it is time to turn to Isocrates, the preeminent pedagogue of the classical era, in order to revive the broader social and political applications and practices of public discourse. As importantly, it is time to regard Isocrates as a primary, rather than a secondary, rhetorical figure, despite his lack of theoretical intellectualism, his failure to speak in public, and his decision not to write a definitive *Art of Rhetoric*.

Although Isocrates did not deliver oral discourses publicly or speak particularly eloquently or mellifluously, he did compose and distribute written documents designed to influence public audiences—a behavior he felt served as an important model for his students. And while he admittedly was not a particularly innovative "philosophical" or "scholarly" thinker himself, Isocrates certainly had great respect for the intellectuals and speculative thinkers of his day, especially Socrates. However, he realized that his own strengths lay in the realm of practical application rather than abstract conjecture, and so he chose to make his contribution to the betterment of society through writing and distributing political discourses dealing with the most pressing issues of the time to political leaders and public audiences and by training other citizens to contribute meaningfully to the future direction and operation of the society. In his own defense, Isocrates asked his fellow citizens to consider that given the educational options available to young people in ancient Athens, it was "a great thing that a young citizen, who perhaps would never have been drawn into the sphere of the philosophers should have set before his mind some interests wider and higher than those suggested by the routine of business and pleasure" (Jebb 44). In other words, Isocrates wanted to offer the young people of Athens a prolonged and progressively more challenging course of study that combined elements of the contemplative educational system of the Socratic/Platonic philosophers, the promises of individual political and social prominence proffered by some of his rival teachers of public discourse, and the more pleasurable and ceremonial rhetoric used in contests and festivals. Therefore, he took what was most useful and practically applicable from these competing models, modified and supplemented them with his own pedagogical objectives, and, as a result, was highly successful at training citizens capable of directly applying what they had learned and practiced in the classroom to matters of community welfare in the public arena. He expected his students to work in the interests of the entire citizenry, not to seek to become Platonic philosopher kings, nor to concentrate their efforts on merely delighting the public with their verbal sparring

contests over issues of no consequence (e.g., "bumblebees and salt"[38]), nor to spend their time arguing cases for personal gain in the courts, nor to seek political prominence for the sake of individual glorification. By encouraging his students at a fairly early age to use their talents in the interests of the broader society, he hoped to ensure their continued participation in the democratic process and their continued interest in critiquing others' positions, producing their own informed opinions, and promoting their judgments through the public distribution of persuasive arguments concerning social and political issues and actions.

Therefore, while most teachers interested in using the lessons of classical rhetoric to reform the composition classroom have turned to the ancient philosophers[39] or to the Sophists, I believe a course modeled on the pedagogical techniques of Isocrates, who was part philosopher *and* part Sophist, part intellectual *and* part show-off, but, most importantly, *all educator*, is most capable of reinvigorating the writing classroom of the twenty-first century and of motivating student writers. Rather than regarding Isocrates' ability to elude pigeonholing as a reason *not* to take him seriously,[40] I find this to be an excellent reason *to* take him seriously. As I will explain in more detail in the following chapters, it is my contention that Isocrates offers a particularly relevant and useful model because he synthesizes and adapts existing models. In other words, "far from posing himself as the alternative to the educational practices of his generation, Isocrates works with what already exists, invests normative instruction with new possibilities, and reorients standardized educational objectives toward novel ends" (T. Poulakos 98). By borrowing heavily from his methods, I hope to do the same.

A Model For Our Times

Isocrates established his uniqueness in ways that seem to me to be particularly applicable to today's writing instructors. For one thing, his school was the first permanent school for advanced education, preceding Plato's Academy by three to five

years[41] and geographically stabilizing what had been offered by the Sophists as a roving and intermittent course of instruction.   In John Poulakos's words, "with the establishment of Isocrates' school, rhetoric stopped being a nomadic show and was given an institutional home" (*Sophistical Rhetoric* 132). Like Isocrates, we also conduct our writing instruction in "institutional homes" and accept students who are willing (or at least able) to pay for our services. However, Isocrates not only had the first established school of what we now characterize as "rhetoric," he was also the first to take the risk of endorsing strongly the fairly new technology of writing and using it as an integral part of his daily instruction. According to Yun Lee Too, "What cannot be overstated is the radicalism of Isocrates' discourse, due to the fact that the written word [was] characterized by 'newness'" (114). Amid harsh criticism about the deleterious effects of writing, most famously that of his rival Plato,[42] Isocrates recognized and championed the cognitive, distributive, and social benefits of writing instruction and, according to Richard Enos, should be "credited as the first to realize the full potential for writing instruction, that is, as a method for facilitating thought and expression in higher education" ("Ancient" 33). In fact, I would argue that for modern-day writing instructors and literary critics, it is fortunate that a weak voice and a shy disposition forced Isocrates to gain his reputation as a writer, rather than a speaker, for although many of his contemporaries wrote their speeches down to aid their memories when delivering them, Isocrates broke new ground by writing speeches that were meant to be *read and reread*, studied closely, and critically taken apart by audiences, rather than delivered once by orators and then discarded or used as nothing more than static classroom models. Furthermore, Isocrates clearly understood that writing is not just the process of producing a text for a specific purpose based on already completed thoughts,[43] but that it is also a practical way of generating, organizing, and circulating our nascent ideas and opinions and also of educating audiences "about the affairs in which we act as citizens" (*Helen* 5).

Democracy, Individualism, and the Citizen Subject

Living as he did in a time of volatile political changes and fledgling democracy, Isocrates was very aware that constantly shifting historical circumstances and social values impacted both his instruction and his students' reception and application of that instruction (after all, he taught for nearly fifty years).[44] He did not regard either himself or his students as autonomous and self-contained subjects, nor did he distinguish between public and private discourse. Instead, through his declaration that "the same arguments which we use in persuading others when we speak in public, we employ also when we deliberate in our own thoughts" (*Antidosis* 255-256) and his insistence on relating all language use to politics and questions of public opinion and decision-making processes, he conceived of rhetoric "less in terms of an individual art and more as a condition for marking the possibilities and limitations that follow from language as a medium of symbolic performance" (Kasteley 221). In doing so, he opened up "the constructedness of any individual or state and the web of entangled commitments that any individual or society inherits and acts upon and must accept responsibility for" (Kasteley 6). In an age when issues such as government and corporate ethics; universal health insurance; tax breaks for the rich; aid to the poor, the sick, and the elderly; and foreign policy are so intensely debated, Isocrates' construction of language as the center of all interrelated individual and social ideas, articulations, and actions is clearly quite relevant.

In his speech *Areopagiticus*, Isocrates praises well-run democracies that are governed by those possessing the highest moral consciences, rather than the most wealth or power gained through litigation and unethical discursive manipulations. He felt that those most capable to lead were those who "regarded the care of the common interests not as a business, but as a public service" (*Areopagiticus* 25). Isocrates did not believe in a democracy "which allots the same to everyone," but rather one "which gives each what is appropriate" (*Areopagiticus* 20). By "appropriate," Isocrates probably meant what was fitting based primarily on a person's bloodlines and social status and secondarily on his

"natural talents" and his willingness to work hard. While this suggests that a (re)new(ed) Isocratean rhetoric would fit in well with our current social meritocracy and capitalist economy since some citizens would be considered "more equal" than others based on their social status and their income-earning potential, it would also promote civic responsibility, public service, and an equitable distribution of resources because Isocrates believed that once the most able public officials were elected, the people should continue to remain "sovereign over them" (*Areopagiticus* 27), which meant that each citizen had the obligation to do his or her part in caring for and constantly negotiating the common interest and in maintaining influence with elected officials through their public discursive performances. In other words, a citizen's actions as an individual were necessarily implicated in her actions as a member of the society, that is, while she had the freedom to deliberate in her own mind and act accordingly, she could not separate her individual choices and decisions from their subsequent effects on those around her.

In the *Areopagiticus*, Isocrates praises a democracy in which "those who [possess] property [do] not look down on those who [live] less well, but [consider] the citizens' poverty as a disgrace to themselves, and [assist] them in their distress" (32). For him, "the essence of good relations among men" was a result of the ownership of property being "secure for those to whom it rightly [belongs], but enjoyed in common by all the citizens who [need] it" (*Areopagiticus* 35). The key to producing such a favorable society is to educate its citizens at an early age since "progress in virtue comes not from [written laws] but from everyday activities" (*Areopagiticus* 39). In his attempt to promote an active and engaged citizenry through his political tracts and especially through his classroom practices, Isocrates devised ways to instill in his students and readers a sense of social responsibility and an active interest in the politics of everyday life (which he saw as the negotiation of the common interest rather than individual consumerism or consumption) without diminishing the importance of each person having the chance to strive for what was best for his or her own individual well being. I think it

would be fair to say that Isocrates certainly would have agreed with Brown's claim that it is "only through a humane polity that collective goals can be established in a noncoercive, nondogmatic way. Such goals have meaning and efficacy to the extent that individuals become committed to them through personal decisions" (52). However, unlike many of us today, when it came to the entity who bears both the name of "individual" and "citizen," for Isocrates, the notion of the individual was the greater abstraction,[45] since one's freedom as an individual could best be confirmed by committing oneself to negotiating issues of politics and justice with other citizens in the *polis*.

In our current situation, "denial of the public sphere is accompanied by celebration of personal lifestyle. Meanwhile, issues of significant public consequence, what should present live possibilities for argumentation and public choice, disappear into the government technocracy or private hands" (Goodnight 259). However, although "emphasizing the power rhetorical skills give *individuals*" in the negotiation of economic, social, and political issues has dominated recent times, this is an "arbitrary punctuation of the rhetorical act," and I concur with James Klumpp that "the equally viable but so far less-explored punctuation that emphasizes the vitality of rhetoric as the key to *communities* successfully negotiating times of change is now a critical priority" (80). Of course, I recognize, as Chantal Mouffe points out, that "the absence of a single substantive common good in modern democratic societies and the separation between the realm of politics and the realm of morality have, no doubt, signified an incontestable gain in individual freedom" (74), particularly when compared to Isocrates' Athens and the plight of women, children, slaves, and non-Greeks. While these gains in individual autonomy certainly should be celebrated, Mouffe also contends that "the consequences for politics have been damaging" because "[a]ll normative concerns have increasingly been relegated to the field of private morality" (74-75). So while I agree with Mouffe that "the recovery of a strong participatory idea of citizenship should not be done at the

cost of sacrificing individual liberty" (72), I would also emphasize her position that we should not "accept a false dichotomy between individual liberty and rights on one side versus civic activity and political community on the other" (75). Instead, following the example of Isocrates, we should encourage continuous public negotiations of democratic citizenship and competing interpretations of the democratic principles of equality, liberty, and the "common good," in order to benefit *both* the *polis and* its individual members.

As Celeste Condit explains:

> Social discourse units carry moral import beyond individual interest, in part, because they indicate *shared* commitments and prescribe what each person as a member of a collectivity is *obligated* to do within the collectivity. More fundamentally, these terms are moral because the public arena, by its very nature, requires the use of terms that match the essential requirements of morality—the sacrifice of self interests for the larger goods. Moreover, the "goods" themselves are created and defined within these contests, because agonistic attempts to apply general concepts of "goodness" to particular issues require the definition, challenge, and transformation of the "general goods" themselves. (309)

Unfortunately, unlike Isocrates, most contemporary American citizens *do* separate their private lives from the life of the *polis* and therefore fail to recognize themselves as always already social and political agents and rarely attempt to debate and decide issues in the broader community and, through their inaction, allow those negotiations and decisions to be left to "the experts." This withdrawal from acting in the public arena and the focus on private individuals thus limits these citizens' ability to create, define, challenge, or transform the contested concepts of the "general good."

Although the modern idea of the universal sovereignty of the subject was most recognizably established in Western philosophy by Descartes, Isocrates was clearly already wrestling with some of the same issues concerning the privatized subject that we

struggle with today. A (re)new(ed) Isocratean alternative to the "modernist conception of student writers as ultimately sovereign subjects, able to 'rise above' the debilitating pressures culture and society place on the production of discourse" (McComiskey, "Post" 41) is to focus on the student as a public citizen. According to Etienne Balibar, "The citizen properly speaking is *neither* the individual *nor* the collective, just as he [sic] is *neither* an exclusively public being *nor* a private being" (51). As I mentioned earlier, Isocrates was acutely aware that each individual's private life was inextricably intertwined with the life of the community, and that is why he encouraged each of his students to become actively involved both in critiquing *and* making community decisions. As Balibar says,

> The citizen is unthinkable as an "isolated" individual, for it is his [sic]
> active participation in politics that makes him exist. But he cannot on that
> account be merged into a "total" collectivity [. . .] this subject (which the
> citizen will be *supposed* to be) contains the paradoxical unity of a
> universal sovereignty and a radical finitude, we must envisage his
> constitution from *both* the point of view of the State apparatus and that of
> the permanent revolution. (51, 55)

Far from rising above the social and cultural pressures of the production and assessment of public discourse, a citizen subject is continually suspended between loyalty to the state and overturning institutionalized policies, sometimes favoring one side, sometimes the other, and deciding on a course of action depending on her perception of the best interests of herself, her provisional communities, and her family, but never in complete isolation from the "general good." As Mouffe elaborates, the citizen's

> wants, choices, and decisions are private because they are the
> responsibility of each individual, but the performances are public because
> they are required to subscribe to the conditions specified in the *respublica*.
> Since the rules of the *respublica* do not enjoin, prohibit, or warrant

> substantive actions and utterances, and do not tell agents what to do, this
> mode of association respects individual liberty. But the individual's
> belonging to the political community and identification with its ethico-
> political principles are manifested by his or her acceptance of the common
> concern expressed in the *respublica*. (81)

In other words, once the individual citizen no longer sees herself as isolated from the social world, she also realizes that her ideas and goals do not originate and terminate solely within herself, but are enmeshed in and act upon the larger community, and she begins to take part as a public citizen in the discursive negotiation of that community.

Our students need to recognize, as Isocrates did and as he encouraged his students to do, that "[w]hatever the private goals motivating individuals to act might be, it is usually only once a public or the citizenry is persuaded to endorse and act upon communally shared goals that history moves forward (or backward) in significant ways" (Lucaites and Condit 4) because, in our current situation, "citizens are effectively removed from political choice, performing the duties of citizenship such as voting—typically on issues about which they have had little say—once every four years out of compulsion or routine" (Giroux 74). However, if we agree to follow Isocrates' lead and do our part to help our students see themselves as public citizens and not just as individuals or wage-earners, they will hopefully come to realize that discourse production is an activity that situates and empowers them within social, economic, and political worlds outside the classroom, and they should be impelled to construct their own discourses for distribution to those wider audiences in order to affect the outcome of and participate in the negotiation of the "general good." As participants in these negotiations, even the most highly interpellated and socially-constructed individuals can have the capacity to intend and to *act*. In the role of public citizens, our students *can* gain meaningful ethical and political agency (rather than a watered-down agency of lifestyle decisions and consumer choices)[46] and *can* begin to take responsibility for their

discursive performances because "without agency we do not act, we merely behave. As agents, however, we become responsible for everything. We become social, historical, public, and political beings" (Brown 31).[47] In this moment in history, we cannot neglect our constructedness as such beings.

A *Kairotic* Moment

In the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Americans seemed to experience a long-forgotten sense of national community and a resurgence of democratic idealism and political and social activism. This time of apparent widespread social and political attentiveness and national cohesion seems to present a *kairotic* moment to make a call for a composition curriculum centered upon the participatory civic and political pedagogy of Isocrates.[48] I agree with Susan Searls Giroux that

> September 11, 2001 may well prove to be a decisive moment in the history
> of the American university. If prior to that date the university was largely
> understood as a corporate entity whose principal obligation to society was
> to train a flexible, skilled workforce, in the post-9/11 climate there seems
> to be a growing interest in the rhetoric—if not the practice—of civic
> education, or what it means to teach students to participate as citizens in
> the moral and political life of a democracy. (57)

Therefore, I contend that this is the time, when Americans are showing more interest in national and community issues,[49] to attempt to balance the powerful "new world" ideologies of progress and individualism with a greater sense of community and civic responsibility and to "address what role the university might play as a part of a broader effort to secure *the very conditions* for democratic participation in public life [and] to open up rather than close down our classrooms to open dialogue and debate" (Giroux 88).

We need, that is, to demonstrate to our students that collective goals *can* be established among individual and diverse citizen subjects and that *informed* judgments and actions can best be achieved through public discussions and deliberations. As we encourage our students to reason together with other citizens, they will not only achieve a reflective awareness of the constructedness of their own views and those of others, but they will come to appreciate and even allow themselves the freedom to be persuaded by alternative viewpoints. As Brown remarks, "In accepting rhetoric as a context and a tradition, we become more aware that there are alternative ways of truth telling and that we are therefore *responsible* for the ways we tell our truths. We can better see the limits of our own perspectives and appreciate the strengths of others" (118, emphasis added). This type of public rhetorical context can also help students understand that there cannot be a society "without relations of power, if you understand them as means by which individuals try to conduct, to determine the behavior of others" (Foucault, *Final* 18). As Michel Foucault explains, "[t]he problem is not of trying to dissolve [these relations of power] in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give one's self the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the *ethos*, the practice of self, which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination" (*Final* 18).

The importance of making informed and responsible judgments is also emphasized by Lyotard. "Consensus," he explains, "has become an outmoded and suspect value. But justice as a value is neither outmoded nor suspect [. . .] This bears witness to the existence of another goal within the system: knowledge of language games as such and the decision to *assume responsibility* for their rules and effects" (*Postmodern* 66, emphasis added). As Isocrates knew 2500 years ago and Lyotard reminds us now, although there is "no final or fixed criteria for judgment" (*Just* 15), and although "the rules defining a [language] game and the 'moves' playable within it *must* be local [. . .] and subject to eventual cancellation" (*Postmodern* 66), "one must decide" (*Just* 17), and

one must be willing to accept the consequences of that decision until the arrival of the next moment of decision and linkage.[50] So, I agree with Mason and Washington that "if teaching students how to think seriously about serious issues runs the risk of promoting irresponsible freedom in some individuals, then that is a danger of living in a liberal democracy, in which citizens are free to broadcast their opinions, to choose, and to make their own mistakes" (9). A much worse scenario would be living in a nation that did not allow citizen subjects the freedom to voice their opinions or to make mistakes.

Of course, I realize that the reality of the modern "global village" is enormous in scope when compared to the classical *polis* and that the lived and "local" experiences of everyday citizens are becoming more and more diversified. Contemporary citizens inhabit a "disparate array of cultural spaces" so that "it is no longer easy for a single individual to accrue either the universal wisdom or the personal authority that was attributed to the classical citizen-orator within the *polis*" (Berlin, *Rhetorics, Poetics* xx). Yet in spite of these potential barriers, modern political and intellectual conditions *do not necessarily* "preclude the survival of public discourse as a means of raising, mediating, and solving communal issues or problems. They only make it difficult" (Crowley, "Plea" 319). For example, by focusing on the effects of one's discourse "as expressed in a social relation typified by power," says Raymie McKerrow, one can approximate "an Isocratean sense of 'community knowledge'" (449).

What we need to realize, emphasize Hauser and Blair, is that "the members of *the* public are those who have the capacity to assume the social-psychological geography of the public sphere, engage in the presentational act, and so suspend their individuality that they are capable of mutual experience through truly public discussion" (160). However, they continue, "the capacity to be regarded as a member of *the* public, or actually to be a part of a public, lies in rhetorical competence, in the ability to participate in rhetorical experiences" (Hauser and Blair 160). As Foucault explains, "each discursive practice implies a play of prescriptions that designate its exclusions and choices," and such

discursive practices "are not purely and simply ways of producing discourse. They are embodied in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns for general behavior, in forms for transmission and diffusion, and in pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain them" (*Language* 199-200). Therefore, I would argue that our job as composition instructors should not be to impose *one* pedagogical form of discourse (e.g., "academic writing" or "Standard Written English") on our students, but to discuss with them *various* institutions, *diverse* patterns of "general" behavior, and *multiple* forms of production, transmission, and distribution of discourse and that we should give them the experience and the opportunity to participate in public conversations and thus the chance not only to listen but to be heard.

The prerequisite of rhetorical competence in order to participate as a member of *the* public (or even *a* public) clarifies why it is so important that we use the freshman composition course, as the one remaining required course in almost all American colleges and universities, as a venue to give our students the opportunity to participate in public rhetorical performances, particularly in a computer-mediated environment, so that they can increase their chances of being regarded as provisional members of a range of contemporary publics and of contributing to community actions and decisions and so that we can prevent ourselves from producing "a citizenry that cannot speak articulately and that regards writing as a tool divorced from language" (Welch, *Electric* 192). I want to clarify that I am not, like some of Isocrates' contemporaries, claiming that all students of such a course will become prominent "movers and shakers" in the public arena (although they could all potentially be leaders somewhere in some capacity). On the contrary, perhaps only two or three from each graduating class across the country will, but, as Isocrates knew, even those who do not turn out to be "competent champions" or "able teachers" will have acquired the facility to become "more gracious in their social intercourse than before, and keener judges of discourse and more prudent counselors" (*Antidosis* 204) through their discursive performances. I certainly would argue that these

are worthwhile results and are more generally meaningful to both our students and our communities than writing motivated by an individual desire to secure a high academic grade point average or a high-paying job.

Like Connors, Bizzell, and others in composition studies, I have "an open and almost ingenuous desire *to do some good in the world* with [my] study and teaching" (Connors, "Rhetorical History" 237). I am not contending that a curriculum based on the classical models of Isocrates will result in a utopian writing classroom or a utopian American or global society, nor that *everyone* who teaches composition should make exclusive use of Isocrates' pedagogical techniques.[51] I am simply claiming that Isocrates offers an especially relevant and easily imitable perspective from which to critique and revise the current prevailing conceptions about the objectives of college writing instruction still held by many educators, administrators, students, taxpayers, and employers, and that a curriculum based on the Isocratean principles of *kairotic* observance of the rules, engaged public performance, open and recurring debate, and responsible judgment is more likely to produce students who leave their writing courses overtly aware of the political and social nature of every act of writing and confident in their ability to use their writing to *do* something not only for themselves but also to invest in a collective effort to create a more just future for their communities—an attitude I believe is in need of revival in our contemporary American society. Of course, I cannot say with certainty that all students who complete such a course will continue to participate actively in the public arena through various discursive performances, that all students will have what we might consider "laudable" conceptions of what constitutes the "common good," or even that all students will be "better" (which most people generally understand to mean more "technically correct") writers. However, I do believe that if we give our students the chance to write about the things that impact their everyday lives, to enter conversations to which they can contribute meaningfully, and to make assertions for which they can take responsibility or, as Isocrates said, "discern the consequences which

for the most part grow out of them" (*Antidosis* 184), they will more readily regard themselves as writers whose discursive performances *can matter* in the world.

Chapter Summaries

This dissertation, then, will use Isocratean pedagogical techniques along with the insight of recent composition theories and teaching practices to revise the freshman writing course and to reinvent it as a course in which students not only learn how to produce "academic" writing and to critique or appreciate extant texts but also learn how to use their own writing and other discursive skills to become active and engaged citizens in communities beyond the campus classroom and the corporate workplace. I will urge contemporary pedagogues to model themselves after Isocrates by embracing new discursive technologies and by actively engaging students and themselves in the construction, critique, and distribution of various popular, literary, and political discourses, whether these discourses are encountered aurally or visually, on paper, face-to-face, or on electronic screens as follows.

Chapter 1, "Isocrates' Legacy and Loss in American Higher Education," revisits the historical narrative of the first-year writing course in American colleges and universities and the restructuring of the undergraduate program of study from a rhetorically-based liberal arts curriculum to a curriculum based on the pursuit of a professional degree in a major discipline. While retelling this narrative, I examine in particular how the Isocratean goals of training students to become active and engaged public citizens largely has been replaced by training students to become individual wage earners and how the broadly-based and extensive study of the public production, analysis, and distribution of discursive performances meant to contribute to the debate and negotiation of emergent social and political issues generally has been replaced by a one- or two-semester course in "first-year composition." My purpose in this chapter is to demonstrate that the current attitudes and practices of undergraduate education and

writing instruction in American colleges and universities are less able to produce public citizens who are motivated to contribute to the maintenance of a just society than a (re)new(ed) Isocratean rhetoric would be.

Chapter 2, "Isocrates' Hybrid Pedagogy: Synthesizing Poetry and Politics, Mechanics and Morality, Ceremonial Display and Civic Duty," examines Isocrates' own educational background and his unique ability to adapt and to synthesize what he believes to be the most useful parts of previous and competing pedagogies. It is my contention that Isocrates offers us a particularly useful and easily imitable pedagogical model by which we can reincorporate more extensive training in civic discourse and public involvement in our contemporary writing classrooms because he uses *both* "poetic" elements of eloquence, aesthetics, imitation, and moral precepts *and* "political" and "legal" elements of argumentation, analysis, proof, and organization. In other words, he breaks down the duality between useful discourse and pleasurable discourse without ever losing his focus on training his students to produce their own delightful and insightful discourses—discourses that were not meant to simply entertain or to result selfishly in the speaker's advantage alone, but were meant to improve the welfare of many.

Chapter 3, "Alongside and Contrary To: How Isocrates Places Himself *Against* The Ancient Sophists and Philosophers," investigates how Isocrates' relationship with and knowledge of specific, historical figures influenced his pedagogy. This chapter extends the argument outlined in Chapter 2 that Isocrates is distinct among his predecessors and rivals not only because he is able to resist easy categorization as either a "sophist" or a "philosopher," but also because he is most able to combine his theories of public discourse and his practices of teaching. I argue that Isocrates is an exceptionally pertinent model for our contemporary classrooms because he works both "alongside and contrary to" the foundational and highly contemplative discursive model of the Platonic/Socratic philosophers and the anti-institutionalism and extreme playfulness of the sophists. By borrowing elements from each of these traditions, Isocrates provides for

us a model that *both* fits within the framework of our own situatedness in educational institutions *and* allows us and our students to resist the ways in which the discursive formations implied by our acceptance of teaching and learning within such institutions constructs us.

Chapter 4, "An Applied Isocratean Curriculum," provides a discussion of how the Isocratean theories and practices of discourse instruction laid out in the previous chapters can be adapted to the twenty-first century college writing classroom in America and includes appendices that provide a sample list of assignments and a guide to assessing student writing in a (re)new(ed) Isocratean course. In this chapter, I also elaborate in further detail the reasons why we ought to consider implementing an Isocratean model for our first-year writing courses and why we ought to consider further instituting the practice of requiring all students to take at least one course in rhetoric and civic writing throughout their undergraduate careers.

I conclude by making a case for the integration of more forms of electronic discourse production and distribution in the Isocratean classroom, as I see the electronic *polis* as a particularly fruitful environment for public debate and negotiation and a place where students can readily receive varied and diverse responses to their discursive performances outside of the context of graded assignments. In addition, since more and more information is being delivered to our students through this medium of communication, they will need the experience of analyzing and producing these kinds of discourses if they are to be able to join fully in these important social conversations.

Chapter 1

Isocrates' Legacy and Loss in American Higher Education

> The art of rhetoric was held in high regard from ancient Greece until late in the 19th century, occupying a prominent position in the paideia, which signified both education and culture. Towards the end of the 19th c., rhetoric fell into disrepute and was no longer taught in the various educational institutions.
> — Samuel Ijsseling, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Conflict*

> English departments got saddled with the [freshman composition] course in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and when they carried it over into their curricula in the twentieth century, they turned it into a lackluster service course, not the rich liberal arts course that it might have been if they had made it the kind of rhetoric course that Isocrates and Cicero had designed for their students.
> —Edward Corbett, "Writing Program Administration"

> The traditional freshman composition course, the textual carnival of correctness, propriety and "good breeding," has served [. . .] to further the end of neutralizing the public participation of its students.
> —Susan Miller, *Textual Carnivals*

Based on the historical evidence, I think that I can say with reasonable confidence that instruction in discourse production and its association with training in citizenship and the production of knowledge was institutionalized in the Western world by Isocrates first. As I mentioned earlier, Isocrates was also among the first educators committed to the use of writing as an important way of thinking, and he sought to teach his students to become ethical citizens and active members of society primarily by requiring them to practice composing increasingly complex texts, culminating in the production and public distribution of imaginative and stylishly arranged prose that dealt with current affairs of the state. He expected this training to provide his students with numerous resources that would allow them to address practical situations in the face of limited knowledge, and he was aware that the habits of language learned and employed by his students during their

time under his tutelage would have lasting social and material consequences not only on themselves but also on their families, their personal associates, and the greater communities of the city, state, and world. Although Isocrates encouraged all of his students to consider becoming leading public figures, he knew that not all of them would wish to do so or be capable of doing so. For the latter, he felt that at the very least his training was "capable of leading them on to self-improvement and to a greater degree of intelligence on many subjects" (*Antidosis* 15). Such traits, he believed, would allow them to contribute to the public welfare in the capacity of critics and advisors and actively engaged public citizens and, albeit on a smaller scale than their more prominent classmates, to act as models for their families and other citizens to emulate.

As I will discuss in more detail later, Isocrates' school not only prompted Aristotle to begin offering public classes in rhetoric at Plato's Academy but also strongly influenced the dominant rhetorical educators of ancient Rome: Cicero and Quintilian. According to Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg's anthology *The Rhetorical Tradition*, Isocrates' renowned pedagogical practices "eventually [became] codified in the [European] trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic that remained unchanged until the Renaissance and was influential in liberal education thereafter" (43). As might be expected, this European model of liberal education was adopted by the earliest colleges established in what was eventually to become the United States of America as well. Although the American colonial colleges were steeped heavily in the tenets of Christian humanism, their curricula generally were still allied with the ancient oratorical tradition and therefore were structured around the classical trivium and quadrivium. Furthermore, many colonial pedagogues recognized Isocrates as a major figure in the classical rhetorical canon.[1] I now want to briefly revisit the history of language instruction in American colleges and universities that has already been narrated by Kitzhaber, Berlin, Crowley, and Miriam Brody, among others, in order to trace Isocrates' legacy and loss within it.

In colonial America, Latin and Greek still were regarded as the principal languages of an educated person (since they were the languages of the church, the law courts, and the medical profession), and the study of classical literature and languages was considered "fundamental to forming ethical human beings and upright citizens" (Winterer 2). Since the primary goals of the classical trivium (as first suggested by Isocrates and eventually culminating in Quintilian's ideal of the *vir bonus*) were preparing students for public duty and developing their moral characters, it follows that the classical course of study in early American colleges often centered on "a rhetoric of public service, a system distinguished by its ethical commitment to the public good" (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 49). These commonalities lead me to suggest that the broadly-based, uniform classical course of study in American colonial colleges initially was not significantly different in design or purpose from Isocrates' extended course, even though Isocrates placed much less emphasis on the more rational topics of the quadrivium (which he considered to be a type of mental "warm-up" exercise for the "real" intellectual work of rhetoric), and he obviously was not at all concerned with Christianity.

Much like Isocrates, the early American college professors were interested primarily in training an elite cadre of young men (and their students, like Isocrates', were almost always men) to become good and respectable citizens who could become leaders for the fledgling nation,[2] and, again like Isocrates, early American educators generally placed great faith in the "trickle-down" idea of social education. The colonial pedagogues anticipated that the developing commonwealth needed leaders disciplined by the precepts of classical learning who would then go forth to lead the masses from the pulpit, the courtroom, and the political stump. Like most of Isocrates' students, the young men who attended the colonial colleges to obtain this education, which was meant to prepare them for eventual public leadership, were members of the genteel class who

had the advantages of financial freedom and, consequently, ample leisure time that could be spent in the classroom rather than in the field or in the shop.

The first American colleges offered a standard curriculum that "was frankly normative: it informed students of their duties to their family, their country, their community, and God" (Reuben 3). In other words, the aims of early American higher education, like those of Isocrates' school, were not narrowly vocational or highly theoretical and contemplative, but were meant to develop men who would "govern wisely" both their own households and the commonwealth. As Isocrates strove to educate public servants who would become generals and politicians, historians and lawmakers, teachers and men of culture, and democratic citizens who would set Athens apart from the non-Hellenic barbarian hordes, the classical course of study in early American colleges was designed to train "the schoolmasters, the divines, the rulers, the cultured ornaments of society—the men who would spell the difference between civilization and barbarism" (Rudolph 6).[3] Several centuries later, when the study of Greek and Latin finally gave way to instruction in the vernacular language and literature, this institutional goal of training "good" and "cultured" citizens transferred somewhat by default to departments of English as well.

Near the end of the nineteenth century, due largely to the influence of faculty members who had earned graduate degrees from German research universities, American colleges changed their courses of study to an elective, rather than a prescribed and uniform curriculum. Perhaps by default, since the freshman writing course was at that point (and, as I pointed out earlier, still is) one of the few remaining required courses at many institutions of higher education, the tasks of developing students' characters and training them to be responsible citizens also took up residence there. However, according to Berlin, what became lost in the gradual transition from the standardized, progressive, four-year, rhetorically-based, liberal arts curriculum to the singular required first-year composition course was "the historical concern of rhetoric for practical action in areas of

public concern affecting all citizens" (*Rhetoric and Reality* 52-53). As I will show, by the turn of the century, training for citizenship no longer was centered on an Isocratean conception of the expansive study of numerous subjects (knowledge of which would allow one to invent an informed argument as each situation demanded *and* to consider carefully the arguments being presented by others before arriving at one's own decision), the cultivation of eloquent expression, and the active production of persuasive public discourse, but rather on the "appreciation" of culturally edifying vernacular literature and the production of error-free prose, knowledge and mastery of which were considered palpable symbols of respectability, taste, and class.[4]

Furthermore, as the initially elite private institutions began to be outnumbered by more inclusive public institutions (particularly after the passage of the Morrill Land Grant of 1862), an increasing societal and student interest in vocationalism and professionalization helped to transform American higher education from a standardized classical course in moral and mental discipline meant to result in a commitment to a life of active citizenship and public service, to a more narrowly focused (but increasingly necessary) avenue for career preparation. In addition, the Isocratean emphasis on a broad, liberal education and the active production of civic and political discourse, which had maintained prominence in Western higher education for over 2300 years, seemed finally to give way to a more characteristically Platonic interest in knowledge for knowledge's sake, withdrawn contemplation, and increased academic specialization, and, consequently, students began to view their education from a perspective of personal advantage rather than public service.

At around the same time, the role of higher education shifted from serving the needs of a burgeoning nation state to serving the needs of an increasingly corporate state,[5] and the ideal of an educated American citizen changed from a community-oriented individual interested in using his or her education to promote the "common good" and who actively engaged in public efforts to arrive at judgments meant to effect positive

social change to "the personal goal of individual fulfillment and career advancement" (Winterer 71). As a result, the American system of higher education largely revised its conception of its proper service to the nation; no longer would colleges principally be concerned with educating political and community leaders, but rather with training career professionals and business leaders.[6] According to education historians, since colleges thus shifted their perceived mission around 1900, "[f]ew new ideas have been advanced on the purpose of higher education [. . .] and there have also been few deviations in its basic pattern of organization" (Veysey 338).[7] Not surprisingly, our own students retain the basic assumption that higher education is a means of obtaining professional credentials, and they still view their degrees "principally as providing tickets to financial security and economic status" and see universities and colleges as the "dispensers of degrees and certificates rather than vibrant communities of educators [and students] who originate, debate, and promulgate important ideas" (Zemsky B8)—ideas that are meant to contribute to the public good and are inextricably tied to broader public goals.

It appears to me that this century-long focus on "individual mobility, economic development, and research designed to assist industry" (Cohen 438) must be implicated in the way in which training in active civic engagement, moral development, and public service—once considered the fundamental core of higher education from the time of Isocrates through the early American liberal arts colleges—has been pushed to the farthest margins of the curriculum. The reduction of a four-year course of increasingly sophisticated study and production of civic-minded rhetorical performances (culminating in the senior course on moral philosophy and the public defense at graduation) to a single year (sometimes even a single semester) of written composition instruction in departments of English followed a parallel track. As I mentioned earlier, what we now recognize as the freshman composition course made its debut at Harvard in the late nineteenth century as the single required course in the new elective curriculum. Most of us are now familiar with the narrative of how this initial writing course has been touted as

a necessary requirement for academic and career preparation for students throughout American higher education ever since. What it has fallen short of being, and what I will argue it should try more explicitly to be, is a course that enables students to use their writing and other discursive performances to examine their roles as public citizen subjects, that asks them to become involved actively in the public production, critique, and distribution of politically meaningful discourse about current affairs, that asks them to counsel diverse others and to be open to counseling from them, and that obligates them to take responsibility for the subsequent social, material, and political consequences of their discursive performances.

Working within the narrative of the history of the composition course that has already been reconstructed by the scholars I mentioned earlier, I now intend to follow the trace of Isocrates' influence as it fades in and out of existence with respect to the writing course in particular and the liberal arts curriculum in general. Beginning with a reconstruction of Isocrates' pedagogical practices, I will show how his conception of higher education largely (if at times unwittingly)[8] influenced the classical courses that were the foundation of education in early American colleges. Next I will investigate how his model gradually lost favor as pre-professional liberal arts colleges steadily were replaced by professional research universities and the wide-ranging study of rhetoric, oratory, and moral philosophy was replaced by the narrowly-conceived "remedial" first-year writing course. Without overlooking the social and economic differences that separate ancient Athens and colonial America from contemporary America, I will examine how the modern university's increasingly restricted foci on individual social and economic advancement (which, I will argue, is distinct from Isocratean self-improvement) and on preparing workers for the corporate marketplace or the research laboratory has largely neglected to emphasize overtly the importance of training students to be Isocratean citizen subjects who can make informed judgments about everyday public issues affecting their lives, their communities, and their nation, who do not assume

that they are powerless to affect the world with their discursive performances, and who are not content with deferring decisions of social import to so-called "experts,"[9] or with assuming the only freedom of choice they have is the not-so-free consumer choices between essentially identical products (e.g., Coke and Pepsi, Reebok and Nike, Fox News and CNN).

Of course, I recognize that when compared to the Greek *polis*, active and engaged public citizenship in the contemporary world is difficult. As Richard Brown explains, "With the decline of intermediary associations such as neighborhoods, union halls, and town meetings, public action has increasingly come to mean action taken as a worker or a professional, as an expert or as someone who is 'just following orders'" (35). These "structural conditions of mass society," says Brown, "encourage a sense of powerlessness which leads the individual to be insensitive to, and uninformed about, an environment over which he believes he has little influence" (37). However, if we reconstruct the classroom and student writing as and in public places,[10] we can "[take] away from the students one of the central strategies by which they defend the ideological assumptions of the existing order—that, after all, it's only 'my opinion,' with which one is free to agree or disagree" (Katz 214). I agree here with Adam Katz that insisting that student writing be distributed beyond the classroom as public discursive performances can enable the students "to see their 'opinions' as historical and social products (and not as their own private property), which can be critiqued and transformed" (214) by other various and diverse citizen subjects.[11] In other words, as Brown remarks, "In accepting rhetoric [understood as public discourse] as a context and a tradition, we become more aware that there are alternative ways of truth telling and that we are therefore responsible for the ways we tell our truths" (118). By viewing their writing as rhetorical public performances, students can be given the opportunity to see that their writing is not just a product that is turned in for a grade, but that it is a potentially influential public *action*,

and, furthermore, that it is an action that can produce serious and lasting social, material, and political *consequences*.

In this chapter, I will attempt to make the case that many institutions of higher education in America are neglecting to educate their students explicitly about the type of active citizenship, public awareness, and social responsibility evoked by an Isocratean liberal arts curriculum, a curriculum that serves several purposes, not the least of which include: "sharpening critical awareness, providing an adornment of manners and knowledge, enhancing communication and interpersonal relations, and leading to tendencies to make better life decisions" (Cohen 450) not only for themselves but also for and with others in their provisional communities. I will not claim that these abilities *cannot* be acquired through the more specialized training of the contemporary discipline-specific elective curriculum, but I tend to agree with Kimball that there is an "essential contradiction between the concern for language, citizenship, and commitment to community and the persistent clinging to a 'study in depth' or undergraduate major" (286). Consequently, I will suggest that rhetorical competencies deserve a more central place in the one course that is still required by most American colleges and universities and thus is shared in common by a substantial portion of the American population—freshman composition.

The Influence of Isocrates' Philosophy of Teaching in American Education

Unfortunately, Isocrates did not leave behind much conclusive evidence about how he actually taught his course. Unlike today's educators, Isocrates did not print a course listing, submit his syllabi to a departmental archive, or provide his lecture notes in a photocopied packet or on the World Wide Web. Unlike his successors Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, he never wrote a rhetorical handbook[12] nor did any of his students compile and publish their notes from his lectures (which, incidentally, also suggests that he did not spend much class time lecturing).[13] Neither, apparently, did he assign a

particular textbook or any textbooks at all, even though, as I will discuss later, several technical composition manuals (or *technai*) were available for that purpose when he began teaching full time in the fourth century BCE. His promising suggestion at the end of *Against the Sophists* that he is about to provide a more complete description of his philosophy of education was never carried out. Consequently, we have to make an educated guess about how he conducted his classes based largely on his criticisms of how his rivals and predecessors taught their courses and the advice he dispensed to his students and leaders in personal correspondences. In the following chapters, I will demonstrate how Isocrates both distinguished himself from and aligned himself with other ancient educators and their pedagogical practices. Now, however, I will consider the specific aspects of his teaching that eventually were to become the predominant models for Western higher education (including the colonial American college) for over two millennia and would earn him the title of "the father of liberal education."

It is especially appropriate to think of Isocrates as the *father* of Western liberal education because he consciously constructed his role as an educator also to be one of a surrogate parent to the young men who came to study with him. One of the most innovative aspects of Isocrates' plan to institute a protracted course of advanced study in a permanent setting was, in fact, student residency. Like early American college students, a young man who came to study with Isocrates was expected to spend three to four years living on the school grounds under the close personal tutelage of a morally upright faculty (in Isocrates' case, of course, he was the sole member of that faculty). The young man's association with his teacher(s) was not meant to be restricted to classroom instruction; on the contrary, the young student was expected to socialize with his lecturer(s) and tutor(s) at meals and after-hours as well. As I will discuss in more detail later, for Isocrates, the most important advantage of his course was not increasing his students' skill in oratory, but improving their moral conduct.[14] In other words, he saw himself first and foremost as a model of moderate and ethical behavior and only secondly

as a professor of oratory. Consequently, he kept a close watch on his charges, cautioning them to stay away from the lure of the "flute girls" and the temptation of the gambling dens[15] and advising them if possible to "avoid drinking-parties altogether," but if ever an occasion arose when they had to be present, they should "rise and take [their] leave before [they became] intoxicated" (*To Demonicus* 32).

Early American college professors and, perhaps even more so, tutors (who most often were young bachelors who lived in the dormitories with the students) were expected to provide a similar moral example. In fact, many patrician parents of colonial youths sent their young sons away to college *because* the system promised to inculcate within them "discipline, morals and character. Each student was to attend the lectures and tutorials, obey the rules, and avoid the company of base people" (Cohen 23). However, unlike Isocrates, who encouraged his students to participate actively in the public life outside the institution (while still remaining under the watchful eye of their master), the early American college campuses generally were intended to isolate the students from the corrupting influences of the "outside" world. Of course, if R. Johnson is correct in his evaluation, Isocrates had a much easier task than his American counterparts because he only had to keep his eye on five or six pupils at a time ("Note" 297), as opposed to the larger classes of fifty to one hundred residential students enrolled at the colonial American colleges.[16]

As class sizes continued to grow and the American system changed from an elite to a mass education model during the decades leading up to and following the Civil War, colleges were increasingly less able to isolate their campus communities from the urban populations around them or to monitor closely the extracurricular activities of their students. Given the size and diversity of the student body at today's American colleges and universities (of which only a fraction now maintain full-time, on-campus residency) it is impractical and, I acknowledge, even unethical to expect the faculty and staff to maintain strict supervision over the students or to try to insist upon a standard moral

policy beyond what the legal system already enforces. However, as I will argue in more detail in the final chapter, some aspects of the personal, protracted, individual attention and mentoring found in Isocrates' classroom and many of the early colleges ought be reexamined and reinstituted in a (re)new(ed) Isocratean course of study. In addition, instructors and students alike ought to reconsider their relationship with the members of their surrounding communities. It is worth considering, for instance, that renewing an Isocratean rhetorical conception of discourse education can "help to move the school and surrounding community toward greater consciousness of their connected places in larger social systems" (Adler-Kassner et al 5), as well as to lead individuals to a greater sense of responsibility and accountability for each other and for the continual negotiation and construction of those social systems of which they are inextricably connected parts. I agree with Robert Zemsky that university presidents ought "to look for opportunities to make their institutions more relevant to public pursuits. They must lead their institutions in identifying public concerns, contributing to the public good, and demonstrating the value of those contributions" (B9) beyond their universities' role as "engines of economic growth" (B9).

While teaching itself undoubtedly is regarded as a publicly influential pursuit by many teachers who assume that they are acting politically and contributing to the public interest by training citizens in their classrooms, I am arguing that these goals must be discussed more overtly with students, who may not recognize how their training can contribute to the public good in other than economic ways. In other words, rather than hoping that assigned readings and class discussions will inherently be understood by students as providing models for future "citizenly" behavior or issuing social precepts in the form of "mission statements" or "graduation objectives," university professors and administrators need to discuss these goals with their students and with members of their surrounding communities more openly and explicitly, and they need to provide students

with more opportunities to engage in deliberations themselves with interlocutors outside of the academic community.

For Isocrates, just issuing precepts about respectable individual and civic behavior was not enough (although he frequently did so). He was acutely aware that his words had to be backed up with his own exemplary conduct, inside the classroom and out. He felt that persons of influence and leaders of society (which he hoped most of his students would become) were obliged to model the behavior they expected their family members, associates, and fellow citizens to follow. He argued that practical training in virtue, though not an exact science, was beneficial for society as a whole, both for those who hold positions of authority and their constituents, because contingently shared understandings and continuous public negotiations about the basic tenets of ethical living and moral integrity should result in mutual respect and trust among the various social classes and open the door for earnest discussion among them about the management of public affairs.[17] He also believed that the reputation a speaker developed throughout her life and brought with her to a public discourse situation was the most important factor in her potential persuasiveness and, therefore, that it was imperative for young people to develop their moral habits early.[18] Finally, he not only strove to be a model of moral conduct, but he was also an active producer of the kinds of discourses that he expected his students to be able to produce by the time they left his tutelage.

Along with his students, Isocrates composed texts that "dealt with what seemed to him the most significant public issues of the time. They were read and criticized by the members of his school and then published, that is copies were made available for general circulation in Greece" (G. Kennedy, "Shadow" 19). The same general pattern was followed in the early American colleges, where the majority of the professors were practicing preachers or served in some other public leadership capacity and, therefore, were active public orators who often spoke on matters of practical political importance to their communities. Although these early faculty members may not have gone so far as to

invite their students to critique their own sermons or speeches, as Isocrates did, they did regularly require their students to address topics of current interest and community impact in their weekly disputations (which were often attended by leading figures in the community) in an effort to prepare them to speak publicly about political, social, and religious controversies.[19] While many of us may recognize how the scholarly writing that we produce and distribute has an impact on other members of our disciplinary communities and thus "trickles down" to students when employed by ourselves and our colleagues in our classrooms, I would suggest that, as did Isocrates, we may need to engage in more recognizably "popular" public kinds of writing (such as writing for non-academic periodicals or websites) in order to model for our students the kinds of public writing they might be able to produce and distribute in order to get the kinds of critical feedback and close readings we enjoy from our own publications. Just as we must respond and react to the questions and the calls for elaboration that our own scholarly writing evokes, just as we can follow up on the impact (or lack thereof) our publications have in the scholarly community and beyond, and just as we regularly face rejection or acceptance of our discursive performances, we need to give our students those opportunities too, and I would venture to say that they have a greater chance of experiencing these political and social implications as writers of "popular" discourses, rather than "scholarly" discourses—at least in the first few years of their college education. These kinds of public discourse opportunities, which Isocrates emphasized in his own curriculum, did exist, as I mentioned earlier, in the form of the open declamations and public oral defenses performed in the early American colleges.

Later, as higher education continued to privilege the ancient languages even though the vernacular had gained prominence in the world of business and politics, the literary debating societies of the mid-nineteenth century sponsored written and oral declamatory competitions to forge "a link between classroom work and the world outside the college" (Graff 46). Unfortunately, student extracurricular interest soon largely

turned away from the literary societies and other "academic" activities and toward athletics and "Greek" social organizations. In addition, as the oral delivery of arguments was replaced increasingly by print, and class sizes continued to grow in the late nineteenth century, classroom declamation exercises fell out of favor, too. Initially, these oral exercises were replaced by "weekly themes" in the new composition classes and eventually were dropped from writing classes altogether. However, as I will argue in more detail in the next chapter, such practical exercises in oral debate can add great value to a class in written discourse production and critique, and we should therefore consider restoring the Isocratean practice of engaging students in oral argumentation exercises such as those of the *dissoi-logoi* in order to prepare them to engage in public *kairotic* and extemporaneous discursive performances—a practice that has been neglected in our recent emphasis on writing as a recursive process.

Another effect of increased class sizes was a change in the expected content and purpose of student writing. Not surprisingly, in situations in which a single professor might be expected to review and correct between 140 to 200 student themes each week,[20] a student rarely was asked to address issues of real social magnitude and instead found that his writing courses "boiled down to little more than a scheme of mechanical classification, imposed by dull textbooks" (Graff 103), and so he generally learned to reduce the writing of the assigned "themes" to a system: "He knows what the instructor wants, he writes accordingly, and is rewarded" (Norris, qtd. in Graff 103). This "boiled down" version of composition had the effect of practically removing from school writing assignments any non-academic rhetorical impetus for composing and essentially any chance of composing texts of social and political consequence. In addition, teachers no longer had time to assess the effectiveness of students' discourses as rhetorical performances and thus had little choice but to concentrate their attention on rapidly correcting the surface-level errors in order to assign and justify a grade.

Although weekly themes generally have become a thing of the past, some contemporary writing assignments have an uncanny resemblance to their late-nineteenth century predecessors. For example, some contemporary composition teachers may encourage their students to write about "what they know" (e.g., "Selfishness," "Education," "Music," or "Our Country")[21] and/or assign a number of "research" papers[22] while others, as Thomas Miller points out, "have largely concentrated on moving students from the domain of personal experience to the conventions of academic essays, with public issues often providing a *convenient backdrop* for that transition" (7, emphasis added). This reveals that even when contemporary writing classes are presented as courses in which students will be asked to examine current issues, most present-day composition instruction does not follow the Isocratean model of requiring students to compose the kinds of discourses that can be taken directly into public (non-classroom) forums.[23]

In a series of studies conducted in the latter decades of the twentieth century, Susan Langer found that "students were rarely challenged to explain their interpretations or encouraged to examine the evidence on which they had based their conclusions." Instead, they typically were "asked to summarize information and points of view that had been presented to them by the teacher or the textbook" (70), a practice not unlike the one experienced by Frank Norris, the late-nineteenth-century undergraduate who describes his writing classes at Berkeley as a matter of learning "to write 'themes' and 'papers' in the true academic style," which is "to read some dozen textbooks and encyclopedia articles on the subject, and to make over the results in his own language" (qtd. in Graff 103). This evidence suggests that, unlike Isocrates, we may often overlook the fact that "the motive, identity, tools, and process—the why, who, and how—are as important as the content—the what—in learning to write and writing to learn" (Russell, "Where" 290), and that we rarely expect our students' writing "to be translated into action and [their] words to be realized in deed" (Rummel 31). Nor do we regard our pupils as "individuals

with a vested interest and commitment to the outcome of their deliberation" (Perkins 65). As a result, public issues remain at best a "convenient backdrop" for "academic essays" that never leave the confines of the classroom rather than an impetus for discourse production that leads to meaningful public action and requires students to listen to various reactions and responses to their writing and to take responsibility for the material and social results of the discourses that they distribute. As Katz remarks, we should be striving to enable our students "to account for" their stated positions and "to inquire into the connections between positions taken, in social, ideological, and subjective terms" (214). The best way to do this, I am arguing, is to insist that our students distribute their writing to broader public audiences than those offered by the academic classroom since "argument has to be public to achieve validity" (Porter 88).

Since Isocrates had so few students at any one time and he placed so much emphasis on individual talent, it seems likely that he would have allowed each student to progress at his own pace and that, rather than assigning a standard set of readings, he instead would have recommended "appropriate reading" based on each student's current aptitude and topic and then would have "supplemented this with his own knowledge or opinions" (Johnson, "Method" 30). This is not to say that the students did not share at least a general conception of "appropriate" reading material or engage in discussions about their source materials or their own compositions in progress. In fact, in this venue, students quickly realized that "the advantage would go to the pupil with the more extensive reading" (Johnson, "Method" 30). Not surprisingly, therefore, group discussion, literary and stylistic analysis, and peer critique were prominent features in Isocrates' classroom, and, in fact, Isocrates even occasionally asked his students to critique his own writing in progress.[24] Isocrates was also in the habit of critiquing his students' classroom declamations in front of the whole class and of encouraging the entire class to listen in on his conferences with individual students so that they all could learn from his experienced assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of that particular

student's composition in progress and each student would get "the advantage of the help of all the others; and all get help and practice from every work composed in the school" (Johnson, "Method" 32). In Isocrates' classroom, conferences on work in progress thus functioned as more of a rhetorical public address and negotiation than a Socratic/Platonic dialogue.

Such performances also prepared the students to anticipate better the responses and expectations of the less familiar audiences they would encounter outside the classroom. In the early American colleges, this type of interactive workshop format was much more common than today's often silent peer-group editing sessions or class discussions of assigned readings, and, like Isocrates' instruction, early education in rhetoric "balanced reading and memorization with composition and performance" (Cohen 36), since students had to be prepared to perform declamations publicly several times each week. Although the Isocratean emphases on peer review and teacher-student conferencing have become standard features of many contemporary composition classrooms, few, if any, present-day composition instructors conduct their conferences before the entire class or pit their students against each other in verbal debates.[25]

What we neglect to prepare our students for by not incorporating such agonistic oral performances into our classroom practices are precisely the two situational demands of rhetoric that were most important to Isocrates—*kairos* and *prepon* (proper timing and appropriateness). While there is much to be said about teaching our students to attempt to anticipate the demands of various written audiences, particularly in an era when so much communication is accomplished in writing, I would venture a guess that once most of our students submit a piece of writing they assume that the issue has been sufficiently explored and the argument they have made has been settled, especially if they have gone through the "process" of writing and revising multiple drafts and especially if their writing goes no further than the teacher's desk, which means they never have the chance to discover how their "intended" audience might have reacted to their written

performance at all.[26] So, while contemporary writing instructors may have incorporated

the rhetorical precept that writing is "instrumental in the discovery of ideas and

information" (Bryant 282), they have failed to act upon the proposition Isocrates

recognizes as the main characteristic rhetorical function of writing, that is, "the

publication, the publicizing, the humanizing, the animating of [ideas and information] for

a realized and usually specific audience" (Bryant 282).

I would also like to emphasize Susan Miller's suggestion that a major

disadvantage of the process model of composition is that it excludes writing that may be

"quickly conceived and executed" (*Textual* 114)—until the final exam, that is. On the

other hand, if students are repeatedly placed in situations where they must think quickly

and face live opponents, they may not only become "extremely resourceful in thinking on

their feet and in making adjustments in their strategy of presentation" (Corbett,

"Rhetoric" 200), they also quickly may realize that they do not have firm control over the

meaning of the language they have chosen to use and how much they may have failed to

consider about the issue. Finally, they may have to examine more closely their reasons

for forming the opinion they are attempting to support and may realize that they must

take responsibility for the potential consequences to themselves and to others that comes

from promoting that opinion.

To my way of thinking, such verbal contests would do more to develop our

students' critical writing, listening, and reading abilities than simply conducting research

to find evidence that supports an often unexamined position on an assigned topic (i.e., the

topic or position that has the most available and accessible support to fit the requirements

of the assignment) that will never be read or taken into account by an audience other than

the teacher. Later, students (and some of their teachers) even may come to realize what

Isocrates knew so well: that writing is not a only a technical competency or a way of

reporting what one has learned, but an essential intellectual proficiency that is associated

closely with our ability to reason and form judgments and that writing is always "an

occasion for making ideas matter" (Gage 25) because the possibility of a student's

discourse being consumed by a public audience "creates responsibilities that thinking

alone can neglect" (Gage 25). As Corbett explains, "Training students to *know*, to

realize, people other than themselves is what prepares them for membership in society"

("Rhetoric" 200). Therefore, we should attempt to find more opportunities to place our

students in situations similar to the ones Isocrates placed his students in, situations that

actively challenge them to make their ideas matter and that insist they listen to others and

engage in a "genuine exchange of ideas" in which they "encounter resistance [and] calls

for equivocation, qualification, and improvement" (Gage 21). I believe that such

interactive performances would contribute greatly to our students' preparation to think,

reason, write, and, most of all, *act* intelligently, critically, and responsibly as citizens—

the goals of Isocrates' curriculum.

Isocrates believed that a citizen had to be able to negotiate the possibilities and

critically weigh the various options that had been presented before he or she could arrive

at an informed decision; he or she could not assume to have foreknowledge of the

outcome or to know the best answer before having heard and considered multiple options.

"People of intelligence," Isocrates maintained, "in dealing with matters about which they

take counsel [. . .] ought not to think that they have exact knowledge of what the result

will be, but to be minded towards these contingencies as men who indeed exercise their

best judgment, but are not sure what the future may hold in store" (*On the Peace* 8-9).

Furthermore, once a judgment had been reached in any particular situation or context,

Isocrates insisted that it should not be considered resolved for good; decisions were

meant to be *kairotic* and expedient, not static and final. In Isocrates' notion of

"deliberation as a public enterprise, there is time to propose and to revoke, to make ends

explicit and to reserve the right to change one's mind" (T. Poulakos 72). Through

engaging in genuine debates carried out with an open mind, our students can learn to

think on their feet and reserve their judgment until they have heard several diverse

opinions. Therefore, in addition to our current practice of asking students to read varying opinions on a topic under debate and to write their own responses, we need to provide more opportunities for them to observe and engage in verbal debates because they should learn that they will not always be given a chance to take their time and to revise their work; sometimes they will just have to be ready to react and to debate and reach a decision quickly.

In addition, many of today's composition teachers who teach out of anthologized readers printed by big textbook publishers that provide suggested writing topics are not often taking the time to assess conscientiously the value of the types of writing tasks they are assigning. The current prevalent assumption among numerous instructors in various disciplines in the academy "that students will write well or learn content through writing simply because they are writing—with or without the motivation to invest the time in writing well," remarks David Russell, "is a legacy of the autonomous view of writing so widespread in our culture" ("Writing" 284). I cannot deny that having students practice writing without any non-academic motivation or context may in fact increase their proficiency in clarity of expression, paragraph arrangement, and mechanical and grammatical correctness (the generalized features of "Standard Written English"), or that anthologized reading assignments and the classroom discussions that follow may allow students to achieve some genuine awareness about contemporary social issues and/or acquire a sufficient knowledge of the subject matter of an academic or professional discipline. In addition, I am not arguing that acquiring such skills, knowledge, and awareness is not beneficial to students as they progress in their academic studies and professional careers or that such competencies can provide a reasonably creditable incentive for many writing students and instructors. However, I do find that this is a fairly restrictive and overly individualistic vision of the personal advantages of learning "academic" or "professional" writing when compared to the full scope of Isocrates' system. Although he too heralded the values of clarity of expression, harmony of

arrangement, and currency of word use, to a much greater extent than most contemporary composition courses (even those that claim to promote "critical thinking" and "cultural consciousness"), Isocrates' system of discourse education "employed the power of *logos* to enhance the critical-analytic abilities of the individual and to inculcate ethical precepts or habits to produce a more harmonious and successful life" (Perkins 62), not just for the individual student but also for diverse others in the various communities in which he or she lived.

When Isocrates took the initiative to offer an incremental course of study to be held in a permanent setting over the course of several years, he also incorporated what Cahn calls his "most important innovation"(135); that is, he removed the technical handbook from the center of instruction and focused instead on the situational demands of rhetorical education—"*kairos*, the gift of proper timing, and *prepon*, the non-rational, inexplicable intuition of adequacy and propriety" (Cahn 129). By placing these situational demands at the forefront of his students' education, while at the same time not neglecting to articulate and demonstrate the persuasive importance of localized discursive rules and conventions, he essentially made it impossible to reduce discourse production to a systematic and technically-oriented enterprise, something that I believe is still happening too frequently today. Rather than emphasizing a set of rules, simply providing his students with easily reproducible topics and patterns for arrangement, or assigning a set of readings conveniently grouped together by an editor (but taken out of their original contexts)[27] to address such issues as "family life," "gender equality," or "consumer privacy,"[28] Isocrates stressed the importance of judgment, inventiveness, and flexibility about what to read (or listen to), how to arrange an argument, and what sort of style to write in because he wanted his students to realize that discourse was not a straightforward device for reporting what was thought to be known, but a way of exploring the unknown, arriving at situational decisions, and forming intelligent opinions.

Our own students, on the other hand, "are sightseers rather than explorers; instead of discovering for themselves, they follow the path laid out in text and lecture, taking notes on what the tour guide/teacher points out" (Dorman and Dorman 119). In other words, what our students tend to do is to become "consumers of learning predigested and packaged by well-intentioned experts, whose evaluation translates into dollars on a paycheck" (Dorman and Dorman 120). Although in 1972 George Kennedy suggested that "an important factor at work in contemporary education is student rejection of sitting and listening or sometimes even sitting and reading, and their longing for participatory education" ("Shadow" 23), I fear that many of our students today long instead to be able to sit and listen to a lecture and then be told what they "need to know" for the examination that follows. Isocrates, on the other hand, stressed participatory education and student creativity, and he expected his students to prepare themselves to deliberate with others on topics of their own choosing, to constantly examine the discourses (both those that they consumed *and* those that they produced) that guided their actions and morals, and to contemplate carefully the available options in order to choose the best course of action in situations open to dispute.

Isocrates also provided his students with model discourses (among which were many of his own) to give them an idea what the conventions of the types of texts they would be producing themselves might be. The texts we give our own students, on the other hand, function "more as commodities than as models for writing" (Welch, "Ideology" 273),[29] that is, the readings are intended to help students learn to examine the contextual nature of knowledge and to broaden their cultural and social horizons by confronting issues of race, class, gender, morality, etc., but the students usually are not expected or allowed to produce similar genres of texts in their own writing assignments. In other words, although students are asked to read selections from personal narratives, graduation speeches, articles from popular periodicals, short stories, poems, and plays, they generally are asked to write "academic essays" based on textual analysis, "outside"

research, and the logical presentation of evidence. While there certainly is some merit (both intellectual and political) in having students complete such structured writing assignments, and while these merits may be intuitively obvious to us as instructors, the problem with providing students with varied reading assignments but standardized writing assignments is that *they* may begin to conceive of their own writing as simply a generalized process or a socially neutral technique, *they* may fail to be aware of or to consider seriously the political and public effects of their absorption, collection, and rearrangement of their assigned readings, and *they* may not imagine when, where, or why *they*—instead of the writers they have read—might want to write for some other reason than fulfilling a classroom assignment. Isocrates, however, insisted that his students attempt to produce discourses that mimicked the public political intent and that mattered just as much as those of the models they had encountered—discourses that would have the chance be regarded seriously by others, not dismissed as unimportant "student writing" or as a classroom exercise, and that would attempt to move others to action in an effort to negotiate for a more just world, not that were composed in the hopes of being translated to "dollars on a paycheck."

In order to best equip his students with a ready arsenal of concepts, precedents, commonplaces, and values to draw upon in a multitude of unpredictable discourse situations, Isocrates attempted to familiarize them with a broad range of informative and influential topics. In addition to the subjects of written and oral composition, Isocrates introduced his pupils to "the matter necessary to form their political, social, and ethical judgments and to provide content for their speeches" including history, political science, geography, ethics, and literary studies (Johnson, "Method" 29). Unlike the contemporary practice of teaching these subjects in separate departments for their own sake, Isocrates taught these studies "for the help they could give to a rhetor in making decisions or influencing an audience" (Johnson, "Method" 29). In other words, his humanistic philosophy of education "broadly surveyed literature, history, and politics to prepare

citizens to speak with practical wisdom from the historical experience and values of the dominant culture" (T. Miller 183); that is, he required his students to read and study diverse subjects not simply to obtain knowledge or to prepare for exams that would "objectively" test their retention of facts, but to accumulate diverse knowledges and "facts" in order to ready themselves to make decisions as both producers and recipients of public discursive performances.

Although we have admittedly experienced an explosion of knowledge in all fields compared to Isocrates' age, we can still expect our students to draw upon the diverse contents of their various courses in order to reach decisions about matters of importance. Unfortunately, however, our students are *not* asked often enough to synthesize the content of their various subjects and then apply them in order to explore, examine, and make decisions about everyday social and political situations because "in college curricula diversity has become smorgasbord, and the students have no guidance or principles to help them integrate their fragmented bits and pieces of knowledge" (Phelps 161). Instead, "school subjects" or "school learning" are considered restricted in their applicability to everyday political and social (non-academic/non-work) life, and the reading done in a history or a philosophy course, for example, is rarely considered as useful for "support" or "evidence" in a writing class that is being taken in an English department, and the students themselves "are often passive learners focused on narrow career goals" rather than "active, independent learner(s) fully engaged in the intellectual and social life of the institution and taking responsibility for understanding and contributing to the larger culture" (Phelps 161). As early as the 1930s, John Dewey saw that there was the potential "that the material of formal instruction will be merely the subject matter of the schools, isolated from the subject matter of life experience" (10). The danger in choosing disciplinary and professional ends as the chief influences of subject matter, Dewey argued, is that such curricular objectives do not acknowledge the social responsibilities of education or "present situations where problems are relevant to

the problems of living together, and where observation and information are calculated to develop social insight and interest" (256).

Given the prevalence of highly specialized disciplinary courses of studies today, I agree with Hollander that one of the most valuable things the academy can gain through a reemphasis on writing as social engagement is "the prospect of new interdisciplinary insights" (vi) that are promoted through the act of making decisions about public issues. In addition, "the humanities and social science requirements that so many students find to be boring or irrelevant [i.e., not "job related"] could be given new life and meaning if the content and pedagogical approach were to be more directly connected to issues of citizenship and government" (Astin 45). Making such connections would require the types of changes to universities curricula that an Isocratean approach could provide, like, for example, "recognition of the fact that civic life and engagement is not just something one talks or thinks or writes about, but also something one *does* and *experiences*" (Astin 45, emphasis added).

As I mentioned earlier, we cannot deny that the amount of information being produced and circulated is far more extensive today than in classical Athens and thus its consumption and dissemination understandably necessitate greater specialization. Even so, the general idea of a student incorporating the information she gains in the study of each of her courses and applying it to her writing in progress in order to use her education to participate as a citizen subject in public debates about issues of social and cultural consequence is certainly *not* untenable and thus, I would argue, ought to be emphasized more frequently. What we need to help our students acquire is not just the capacity to find information and to summarize it or regurgitate it (and then perform a "data dump" on it), but "the capacity to evaluate and use information for positive social, civic and economic purposes. This requires transforming information into ideas and analysis useful to making judgments" (Walshok 74). The best place to provide students with such capabilities, I am arguing, is in a (re)new(ed) Isocratean writing class. By virtue of the

fact that composition does not have its own "subject matter" per se, it becomes the ideal site for interdisciplinary synthesis and practical applications, a course in which students can begin to realize that, in spite of institutionalized compartmentalization and specialization, the various fields of study *do* intersect and *can* provide a writer with a diverse amount of material (whether literary, historical, political, scientific, or "popular") with which to influence and connect with an audience when supporting or refuting a disputed situation or with which to influence his or her own decision-making processes.[30]

These were generally the goals of the early American colleges' liberal arts curricula as well. As described in the Yale report of 1828, American higher education, like Isocrates' curriculum, was initially designed to be "preparatory to the study of a profession" and therefore to provide a general background of knowledge so that "wherever [the college graduate] goes, into whatever company he [*sic*.] falls, he has those general views, on every topic of interest, which will enable him to understand, to digest, and to form a correct opinion on the statements and discussions he hears" (qtd. in Spring 77). Not surprisingly, also like Isocrates, the elitist authors of the Yale report had a fairly elevated and therefore limited view of the scope of "general" knowledge, held a similar prejudice against technical training, and favored the production of the "intelligent gentleman of leisure" (Veysey 189). Such a narrow understanding of the scope of the purposes and the potential recipients of education could not be maintained in the increasingly democratic and technological America of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century and certainly could not and should not be maintained today, when many jobs require at least some post-secondary education, if not post-graduate specialized programs in science, engineering, education, law, medicine, business, etc.

In our own teaching practices, we cannot overlook the fact that securing a job is a very real necessity and concern for our students, who are not all members of the privileged classes. On the other hand, I would argue that American higher education generally has gone too far in the other direction; that is, we now focus so intently on

preparing our undergraduates for careers (getting them to choose majors as early as possible and then filling their schedules with as many courses directly related to that major as possible—very few of which are writing courses) that we neglect to train them how to conduct themselves responsibly as active public citizens, how to arrive at decisions regarding non-work-related issues, or how to contribute meaningfully to the "governance" of their communities and households. These traits have an equally significant impact on their future quality of life and, therefore, I am suggesting that they should be restored as a consistent requirement throughout the undergraduate curriculum.

Of course, I am aware that in our current society "schools tend to reproduce the existing social structure: the hierarchy of wealth and status, the alienated work pattern that sustains capitalism, the external discipline of labor, and the internalized profit goals of management, the consumer ideal, and much more" (Herzberg, "Composition" 98). In fact, this is precisely why we need to be cautious about representing the competent student writer as having "a mastery that evokes the cultural authorization of the *professional managerial classes*, whose capital resides in their ability to have opinions, make judgments, present views, and offer compelling accounts and explanations of their own and other people's experiences" (Trimbur, "Composition" 193, emphasis added), instead of sharing Isocrates' faith that "the power to judge of what ought to be done is an endowment common to all of us" (*Archidamus* 3). In other words, we need to be mindful of the fact that "class, perhaps more than any other feature, forms the basis for much of what the profession as well as the general public expects of composition" (Bloom 656). As I have been suggesting, "[i]t is the collective belief of the American educational enterprise that freshman composition will help students do better in their other classes, and beyond college in the life—almost assuredly middle class—for which their education has prepared them" (Bloom 665).

Although Isocrates himself undoubtedly promoted a patrician form of education and taught only students in the middle- to upper-class who "could afford the time and

possessed sufficient means" (*Areopagiticus* 26) to pursue an education, and although he would probably concur with Trimbur that it is those who have accumulated a sufficient amount of cultural (which often equates to monetary) capital who are most often able to offer their opinions, make judgments, and publicly present their views, I would like to suggest that a (re)new(ed) Isocratean curriculum of the twenty-first century would not fail "to address the complexities of those students who are below the powerful but consistently imperceptible line marking the middle class: those who work several jobs while attending classes, those who lack the resources to concentrate (and concentrate on) a college career" (Mauk 382) or to respect those who may be motivated to learn writing primarily as a means of gaining lucrative employment. In fact, I would argue that the convergence of the academic world and the "real" world in a (re)new(ed) Isocratean classroom—a classroom in which "the world around the student is not merely something to feed or prompt writing; it is also implicated in the act of language/text production" (Mauk 382)—would in fact allow students from various social classes to associate writing not only with job attainment and professional accreditation but also with political and social engagement, and would thereby offer them all the chance to voice their opinions, to present their views, to make judgments, and to see and be accountable for the tangible results of their discursive performances not only in their work environments (e.g. a raise, a paycheck, a product sold, or a contract "landed") but in the negotiations of the public good and the governance of their households and their communities—a purpose that was largely neglected when the shadow of the Isocratean liberal arts tradition began to fade from the increasingly professionalized American college and university.

The Rise of Professionalism: Rhetoric Becomes Composition

As I mentioned earlier, several excellent histories have already been written that analyze in depth the writing pedagogies of nineteenth-century American higher education.[31] My purpose here is not to duplicate such scholarship, but briefly to

reconsider in Isocratean terms what Trimbur calls the "master narrative" of the "tragic fall" of rhetoric when, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, "the mission of rhetoric shifted from preparing citizens to participate in public life to training a newly emerging professional-managerial class in composition" ("Writing" 133).[32] I will argue that the historical narrative that illustrates the increased amount of attention paid to professionalism and to individual career progression by university students, faculty, and administrators, as well as society in general, must also be implicated in the decline in the time-honored Isocratean vision of a liberal rhetorical education meant to train young people for active lives of public service in addition to being responsible for reducing writing instruction to a one year (or even one semester) course in individual, academic and professional competence and certification, as other scholars have already described and I only wish to recap in terms of the Isocratean writing classroom here.

Numerous social and intellectual changes occurred in the nineteenth century that substantially affected the initial system of small, elite colonial colleges in America. To begin with, the period after the American Revolution ushered in an increasingly democratic attitude toward national governance and higher education. No longer were the American people satisfied to enable only a privileged few to attain the culture, sophistication, and intellectual training needed to gain national, professional, or individual power and prominence. In addition, as religion was gradually replaced by science and qualitative and quantitative research as the controlling paradigms for intellectuals and other persons of influence, more and more secular colleges were chartered. These secular colleges were staffed with professionally educated faculty who were eager to explore the commercial potential and to engage in the intellectual excitement of new scientific discoveries rather than classically educated preachers who favored the moral lessons of the past. Finally, in an increasingly complex, literate, and technological society, apprenticeship in trade and industry was no longer considered sufficient training for most job-seekers and technically-skilled faculty who would train

students in the mechanical and agricultural fields began to be hired as professors to supplement the more traditional, liberally-trained intellectuals. Particularly after the approval of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 (which allowed states to build institutions devoted to the non-liberal studies of agriculture, mechanics, and engineering), the idea that one's future source of income should be the focus of one's educational training gained greater favor and the traditional classical curriculum was first supplemented, and then overtaken, by commercial, industrial, and professional courses. Consequently, education began to be looked upon primarily as a way to achieve individual, material success, and a "good" citizen was considered to be a worker and consumer who contributed plentifully to the successes of the commercial marketplace rather than as someone who actively engaged in public debates and made judgments in an effort to promote a more just society or work toward negotiating the "common good" with others in their provisional communities.

In the new professionally-oriented university, preparing students to obtain jobs and make money often was valued more highly than openly attempting to develop the young students' moral virtues or public consciousness, and higher education was viewed more and more as a personal investment rather than a social investment, its students as economic rather than political agents. While the "old-time" college system, like Isocrates' school, recognized institutions of education "as social institutions and learned men as both masters and servants of society" and therefore was "committed to social needs rather than to individual preference and self-indulgence" (Rudolph 59) or personal advancement, it was doomed by cultural and academic changes because it "was not an institution that catered to middle-class ambitions and careers" (Bledstein 203). Therefore, in conjunction with the decline of the old liberal-arts colleges, the influence of Isocrates waned in American higher education.

The traditional notion that higher education should consist of liberal, nonvocational studies soon was considered irrelevant and even irresponsible by a student

body seeking job-preparation skills, and the uniform required course load of classical studies was criticized since it did not allow sufficient room for studying professional subjects because its focus on a breadth of topics effectively prevented the accumulation of a depth of knowledge in any one particular professional field. Instead, the elective curriculum (first introduced at Harvard in 1869) was heralded as a way to enable students to become trained experts in a specific job or academic discipline. Moreover, as the number of specialized disciplines grew, it became unreasonable to expect the faculty to be familiar with and incorporate each others' subjects in their own lectures and assignments, as often occurred in the early liberal arts colleges. Due to the elective system's diverse offerings, "faculty could not teach, evaluate, or, in some cases, even understand the arguments of students from so many specialized disciplines, each with its own vocabulary, issues and conventions, its own criteria for evaluating evidence and arguments" (Russell, *Writing* 55).

In this new system that favored a commitment to professional progress and embraced specialization over efforts to integrate various forms of knowledge in an effort to effect social change, the Isocratean commitment to a broad education meant to develop students' characters, prepare them to engage in public discourse and debate, and to decide upon issues of political importance was neglected. In addition, Isocrates' commitment to try to strengthen his students' sense of obligation to serve both themselves *and* society politically and culturally by and large was replaced by a pointed interest in the success of the individual in his or her career or his or her contributions to society as an economic wage earner and consumer. Despite the inclusion of "core requirements" and "cultural diversity requirements" at many American colleges and universities, the elective curriculum continues to promote individual career goals and specialized knowledge above public political involvement, which is to the detriment of students' later involvement as citizen subjects in helping to determine the future of society, since they are not explicitly and conscientiously developing the habits of active participation in civic

affairs throughout their college careers, nor are they being asked to recognize and act upon the ways in which public and private discourses are always already implicated with each other or to see that their concern with individual success ought to be balanced with an interest in the "general good."

Isocrates would have been distressed to see his educational ideal of closely mentoring and developing engaged public citizens being replaced with the view that individuals have the right "to be left alone to pursue personal advancement" (T. Miller 187). He certainly would not have agreed with the idea that an individual's vocational ambition could be equated to service to society by way of his or her economic contributions. While he would not have disagreed that each person's ability to lead a successful career contributes importantly to the smooth functioning of society or that many individuals accomplished in a variety of skills and knowledges makes for a stronger overall community, he would have been appalled by the attitude that one should "abstain from all social action except the pursuit of [one's] individual economic goals in the market, and voting for candidates for public office" (Ohmann, *English* 88), an attitude that became increasingly common in the late-nineteenth century and generally remains prevalent today.[33]

For Isocrates, the notion of a "private citizen" was highly distasteful, as he made clear in his criticism of Plato's and Socrates' ideal of the man of wisdom who removed himself from society and did not engage in public debates and affairs. Indeed, Isocrates could not conceive of individuals as autonomous, private citizens who considered themselves distinct and separate from the larger social order. In addition, as his criticism of those Sophists who claimed their lessons would ensure that their students gained personal power and would win all their legal battles indicates, Isocrates also did not agree that self-development should be confined to the achievement of one person's selfish ends, but he thought instead that an education that led to an individual's development of virtue, knowledge, and judgment should be sought out as a way of contributing one's talents to

the public good.[34] As the "hymn to logos" demonstrates, Isocrates was convinced that

public exchanges of opinions and communal decision-making processes are the

foundations of a democratic society, that discourse production is always already a social

activity that is implicated in and affected by one's membership in a community (however

provisional) and therefore is dependent on that community for its existence and its

meaning; this is why he placed the production, assessment, and distribution of discourse

at the center of his curriculum and incorporated writing and speaking into every other

subject he taught throughout his students' three- to four-year course of study. As I will

argue in further detail in the final chapter, we should consider incorporating a similar

four-year requisite study of rhetoric and public discourse into our current elective

curriculum, thereby garnering the benefits of each.

     As American universities moved away from the uniform classical curriculum in

the nineteenth century, they not only drifted away from an Isocratean focus on moral

development and public service, they also moved

> from regular, college-mandated writing and speaking on a wide range of
>
> public matters for all students in all undergraduate years to the modern
>
> system of individual-faculty responsibility for required writing on specific
>
> disciplinary topics rather than on general public matters with no
>
> university-wide writing and speaking requirement beyond freshman
>
> composition. (Russell, *Writing* 46)

At about the same time, "[t]he active, personal, language-dependent [Isocratean]

instructional methods of the old curriculum were replaced by passive, rather impersonal

methods: lecture, objective testing, and the like" (Russell, *Writing* 21). In an

increasingly specialized research-oriented university confronted with growing numbers of

career-oriented students, the faculty steadily, and somewhat understandably, became

"teacher-scholars" rather than Isocratean "teacher-mentors" and eventually focused most

of their attention on their own research agendas rather than on undergraduate education

and their students' development as citizen subjects.[35] Such professors "made the older type of college teacher [and thus Isocrates] seem a *mere schoolmaster*" (Graff 5, emphasis added) and contributed to the devaluation and demotion of faculty who were committed to their young students and their teaching, rather than to their graduate students and their research.[36] Although the importance of teaching is given a great deal of "lip service" in the contemporary academy, the trend of rewarding excellence in research and scholarship more than excellence in teaching and student advising or mentoring remains prevalent and, as I argued earlier, has also contributed to the general scholarly dismissal of Isocrates as a figure worth studying in the contemporary academy.

In the new "research" institutions, writing assignments became a way of "objectively" testing a student's retention of the lecture material, her ability to record and recall facts accurately, or his mastery of a "standard" tone, dialect, and grammar rather than a performance-centered, interactive, context-driven, Isocratean, social activity involving a range of rhetorical choices and having a potential public impact. Although students were unquestionably receiving lots of writing practice, they were performing these writing tasks in the absence of a comprehensive rhetorical theory such as the one upon which Isocrates based his students' practice performances. More and more, writing was viewed as objective, fixed, and expository, the "unproblematic recording of facts in correct language" rather than what Isocrates knew it to be, that is, "the site of a rhetorical struggle among shifting interests for impermanent victories" (Russell, *Writing* 73). The classical definition of rhetoric as "the art that studied the generation and reception of effective public discourse" was no longer suited "to the modern belief that knowledge resulted from the actions of individual minds on the things of the world" (Crowley, *Methodical* 4). According to Russell, the late-nineteenth-century academics and intellectuals in the various research disciplines thought of their own writing "not as persuasive discourse, subject to the same rhetorical and stylistic analysis as a sermon or campaign speech, but rather as an unproblematic rendering of the fruits of research,

untainted by rhetorical and stylistic concerns" (*Writing* 10). It follows, therefore, that they eventually came to regard their students' writing simply as a technical skill necessary for those expecting to pursue careers in a society that increasingly depended on the written and printed word to conduct its business—a skill, moreover, that could be learned "once and for all" in a freshman writing course. Thus the rich tradition of rhetoric and public discourse started by Isocrates essentially was reduced to a single formalized and uncontextualized general class in research methods, organization, and style.

At about the same time, in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, colleges across America dropped their Greek and Latin requirements despite the classicists' argument that "scientism and utilitarianism in education could devolve into crass materialism and an aloofness from civic concerns" (Winterer 4).[37] This decline in course offerings in classical literacy and rhetoric was accompanied by the introduction of "basic" writing courses in departments of English.[38] Initially, rhetoricians were most often called upon to teach English literature and composition although there was "no compelling reason at the outset why the teaching of *composition* should have been entrusted to teachers of the English language and literature" (Parker 347). Apparently, in an era in which the general population and academics agreed that college students needed to be prepared to write "correctly" and competently in order to get ahead in the job market, "no one knew how to achieve that result other than by delegating the job to the English department" (Ohmann, *English* 301). Thus, "when an American agenda established 'English' as a literary discipline," it established a subject "whose predominant images cooperated with developing middle-class values [and] stresse[d] upward mobility" (S. Miller, *Textual* 35). Writing instruction was thereby effectively disengaged from political action in the public sphere and the Isocratean emphasis on teaching writing as a way of deliberating about and deciding upon matters of importance steadily was reduced to a course emphasizing mechanical skills and formal conventions that were

thought to be highly teachable for instructors and able to be mastered by students through attention to writing as a technical proficiency.

As professors trained in rhetoric and oratory began to disappear from departments of English language and literature and "rhetoric's broader attention to political discourse and popular values became subordinated to the study of nonutilitarian, nonfactual discourse" (T. Miller 3), written composition thus became "chiefly identified with that dismal, un-flowering desert, freshman theme-writing" (Parker 349). At about the same time, the study of the vernacular language and literature generally ceased to be conceived of in the Isocratean manner as public discourse suited for shaping the politics and morals of future citizens and applicable to deliberation about shared goals and ideals and the governance and everyday functioning of society.[39] Instead, literature's rhetorical function was subordinated to its aesthetic function "in the assumption that few students would have the occasion to speak as civic orators but all could advance in civil society if they mastered the tastes of the dominant culture" (T. Miller 203). This trend toward belletrism moved the study of language away from reading texts in anticipation of producing one's own discourse aimed at practical involvement in debates and judgments of social and political importance to center on the individual as a critical consumer, an impartial spectator, or a reporter.[40] Such techniques were thought to contribute to the cultivation of "the virtues of the plain and simple man of business" (T. Miller 203). In this way, literary studies could be said to be contributing to the educational needs of the marketplace and English could claim its legitimacy as a discipline based on the specialized task of literary analysis.[41] However, this trend away from a traditional rhetorical concern with the generative function of reading, the production of discourse as a prelude to public distribution, public debate, and public action, and an Isocratean conception of writing as an activity that discovers new knowledge and promotes *kairotic* and contextualized judgments, not merely presents established ideas, contributed further to the reduction of the composition course in departments of English to a hollowed-out

subject that stressed form over content, correctness over inventiveness, and mechanics over context.[42] Many of these early attitudes toward college writing instruction continue to contribute to how writing is taught in many departments of English in the American academy today, in spite of the notable efforts of scholars and practitioners in the discipline of rhetoric and composition to overturn them.

While Isocrates undeniably was interested in the uses of memorable style and appropriate diction, for him content was most important, and he was "prepared to sacrifice form to content and to neglect stylistic principles if the context required it" (Rummel 30). In comparison, "with its emphasis on spelling, punctuation, and surface correctness," freshman composition "has often been a fragmented rhetoric of form without content" (Horner, "Historical" 2), which "strips from new students and a nation of unschooled potential writers their needs and desires to create a significant piece of writing" (S. Miller, *Textual* 55). Eventually, fewer and fewer teachers of composition received any formal academic training in rhetoric,[43] and they consequently began to rely more and more on mass-produced textbooks to teach *them* how to teach their students how to write.[44] Grammar handbooks became the main sources for writing exercises and anthologized readers the sources for reading assignments and paper topics, a trend that is maintained today in many departments of English that focus primarily on training literary critics and linguists, not writing instructors,[45] and that do not regard writing instruction as worth the effort of "serious" scholars, as evidenced by the oft-lamented but still practiced fact that the first-year writing course is most often relegated to graduate students, adjuncts, and part-time instructors who are told what texts to use, what assignments to give, and how to grade those assignments (usually with a strong emphasis on grammar and mechanics)—assignments that rarely, if ever, are distributed to audiences beyond the walls of the classroom. Such treatments of writing instruction are a far cry from the exalted place that training in rhetoric and civic discourse enjoyed in Isocrates' school. Nor do such programs take into account the importance of *kairos* and *prepon*—the

essential components of Isocratean instruction—but prefer instead to maintain the illusion of the adequacy of instruction in a generalized "academic" writing style that can be assessed with a generalized grading rubric supposedly appropriate for any writing situation and any audience.

In addition, since many composition teachers in English departments have received specialized training in literary criticism,[46] they often feel most comfortable devoting class time to textual analysis. Such practice interpreting texts is often intended to achieve the humanist goals of cultivating students' characters and exposing them to the aesthetic effects of literary writing. It is far less frequently presented in the Isocratean manner as an activity meant to help students assess the moral and political values of their audience, produce new knowledge, or serve as an impetus for their own publicly engaged and socially motivated writing. One potential disadvantage of privileging reading over writing and analysis or summary of existing texts over critical integration of these completed texts into the students' own persuasive texts is that instead of consciously and creatively negotiating and critically assessing social issues themselves, students may allow their professor, the textbook editors, or the authors in the anthology to decide which issues ought to be worthy of consideration. In addition, students may not learn to see *themselves* as writers, may not see any value in developing and discussing and modifying their own opinions, and may not be excited about having something to say. Instead, they may come to regard the completed and anthologized texts as "untouchable" and their own written work only as a test of how well they can interpret and report on these definitive texts and how well they can follow the conventions of "Standard Written English" (because they certainly have not earned the privilege to ignore these conventions or to break these rules, even though they probably have noticed that the authors of the texts they are reading have done so).

These misunderstandings are often reinforced by their teacher's assessment techniques because student writing usually is not evaluated either for the knowledge it

produces or the potential contribution it might make to society. Furthermore, very little attention usually is paid to the creativity or the critical insight of the students' ideas. In the best-case scenarios, students' arguments are evaluated on their use of evidence and logical reasoning, their structural fluency, and the force of their presentation. In the worst-case scenarios, student papers are graded for "correctness" or mastery of sheer technique.[47] However, as I will argue in more detail in the following chapters, I believe that Isocrates provides an excellent model by which we can renew and revitalize "rhetoric's traditional concern for how people draw on popular values [such as those discovered in "literary" texts] to resolve conflicts and deliberate on shared problems" (T. Miller 7), and I will attempt to explain and expand upon his pedagogical methods and educational values and priorities by examining his background, his texts, and his unique ability to synthesize and reconstruct the lessons and ideologies of his own teachers and rival instructors.

Chapter 2

Isocrates' Hybrid Pedagogy: Synthesizing Poetry and Politics, Mechanics and Morality, Ceremonial Display and Civic Duty

> Isocrates saw himself in a synthetic role.
> —Terry Papillion

> It is noteworthy that the Greek word for composition is "synthesis."
> —Kathleen Welch, *Contemporary*

As I discussed briefly in the Introduction, Isocrates founded his school out of a desire to move people to action for the common good and to form men capable of serving the state "by counsel, word, and deed" (Dionysius 105). Especially in the new era of the Greek democracies, Isocrates saw public discourse as the basis of a functional civic community and a boon to his project of Panhellenism. During this same time, the Greeks were undergoing a transition from a principally mythic-poetic, oral culture to a humanistic, literate culture. As I will demonstrate, through his distinctive method of instruction, Isocrates was able to preserve the aesthetic dimension of the traditional epic education while at the same time introducing his students to the more rationalistic, formal elements of prose discourse (such as the organizational parts of common and legal speeches) that allegedly had been developed by Corax and Tisias and their successors in the fifth century and were preserved in various handbooks, or *technai*. My contention is that Isocrates' great successes as an educator resulted from his unique ability to adapt to and to capitalize on the changing conditions and technologies of his time without disregarding the lessons of the past and to synthesize, supplement, and refine competing cultural ideologies and educational strategies without ever compromising his focus on promoting a life of active participation in the *polis,* which he believed would be beneficial to most

individual citizen subjects as well as the general population of the city of Athens and the broader Pan-Hellenic state.

My purpose in this chapter is to explore the social and historical contingencies that influenced Isocrates and his pedagogical program *in particular*, not to present a comprehensive survey of the forces that contributed to the flourishing of rhetoric in the fourth century BCE.[1] I intend to demonstrate how Isocrates incorporated, resisted, and adapted the prevalent pedagogical strategies of his time in order to develop a useful *and* pleasurable, a logical *and* creative, and a relativistic *and* decisive pedagogical practice—a teaching strategy that, as I have been suggesting, has the potential to reinvigorate the curriculum of our first-year composition classrooms and to motivate the student writers of the twenty-first century. In this chapter, I will investigate who Isocrates was, how he was "called" to the vocation of teaching, and how he distinguished his teaching practices from the available alternatives. In the next chapter, I will examine specific individuals with whom Isocrates studied and contended and their influences on both him and his pedagogy.

Biographical Background

Isocrates was born in Athens in 436 BCE, five years before the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. His father, Theodorus, was a well-to-do merchant who made his fortune as the owner of a flute manufacturing business run by slave labor. Theodorus, like other wealthy parents of the period, could afford to send his children to school at an early age and allow them to continue their education well into young adulthood as they were not expected or required to return to labor in the family business, but were given the leisure to "develop their character."[2] Isocrates began his schooling at a time when the Greek cultural ideal of formal classroom education did not regard schooling as a means for young people to accumulate a store of abstract knowledge and certainly not as a way to learn a specific technical or trade skill (after all, there were plenty of slaves and non-

Greeks who could be trained to perform "blue-collar" labor and professional training for such fields as medicine was done on a master-apprentice basis).[3] Instead, the children privileged enough to attend school were instructed "in the skills and values necessary for participation in the society" (Nash et al 1) and were educated through a process "that produced and formed the good and obedient citizen" (Too 206). The principal means of training this good and obedient Greek citizen was to develop his[4] mind and morals through the assimilation and performance of epic poetry (both the words and the music) and to develop his body with physical exercise.

As a child in primary school, Isocrates would have received such an ideal "citizen's" education and would have been assigned lessons in music, gymnastics, and the oral memorization, recitation, and improvisation of poetry. Although Isocrates was born at the cusp of the "literate revolution" in Greece, I suspect that he most likely also received instruction in reading and writing at a young age—at least being taught to memorize the alphabet and perform some basic composition exercises.[5] It is less likely that he was assigned any systematic grammar exercises or asked to engage in critical analyses of the poets at this early stage, as these subjects did not become standard in the Greek elementary schools until several years later.[6] This portion of Isocrates' education probably lasted until he was about fourteen years old.

Ideally, higher education for young men of sufficient wealth like Isocrates was meant to continue the civic project of the primary schools and produce a man "who had been trained, morally, intellectually, and aesthetically, to use his powers in the interest of the state" (Walden viii). However, post-primary education in fifth century Greece was not yet state-sponsored or institutionalized and thus was not widely available. Young male citizens desiring to further their education and to gain greater facility in speaking and debating (skills which were rapidly becoming a necessity for full civic participation in the burgeoning Greek democracies and for self-representation and self-defense in the increasingly litigious city-states) were obliged to attend the geographically drifting

lectures and declamations[7] of the itinerant men of wisdom known generically as "the Sophists." This method of education was tenuous and inconsistent at best, as the student either had to await the arrival of one of these wandering showmen and teachers in his city[8] or had to travel along from city to city with him.[9]

The students most able to attach themselves to one teacher and attend his lectures and demonstrations over any period of time were, of course, young men of the leisure class as was Isocrates, although even this somewhat more consistent association did not necessarily result in a sustained or structured course of study. Even so, Isocrates seems to have been able to take advantage of many of these educational opportunities, and he proudly proclaimed that his father spent much of his fortune educating him (Isocrates) with care (*Antidosis* 161). According to the reports of various biographers (both ancient and modern), Isocrates can with some certainty be said to have attended the lectures of many of the most prominent Sophists including Prodicus, Gorgias, Tisias, and Theramenes.[10] Of these, Gorgias generally is recognized as the most influential.[11] Isocrates also is said to have been acquainted with—or at least certainly to have known about and admired the lessons of—both Protagoras and Socrates, as I will explain in more detail in the next chapter.[12]

The fall of Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian War in 404 found Isocrates' father's flute business in dire financial straits and Isocrates himself deprived of most of his anticipated patrimony. This striking personal experience of the instability of wealth and the uncertainty of assumed hereditary and monetary "guarantees" was a formative revelation for the young man; he would later pass along the lesson of this experience to his students, urging them to focus their efforts on education and the establishment of a solid reputation rather than the stockpiling of wealth because wisdom and respect were harder to lose than accumulated wealth and more beneficial to one's successors as well.[13] This experience must have also solidified Isocrates' acceptance of the "sophistic" principle that everything in human life is always unstable and in flux and that the future is

unpredictable—other lessons he would pass along to his students and his public audiences.[14]

Finding himself suddenly relatively destitute and thus forced to work for a living, Isocrates spent the years from about 403 to 393 as a logographer, or forensic speech writer for hire. Undoubtedly, during this time he applied and refined the knowledge and tenets of judicial oratory he had practiced, read about, and seen demonstrated during his association with the various Sophists. However, Isocrates had taken his early school lessons about the duties of a proper citizen seriously and he had also gleaned the idea from several of his sophistic instructors that facility in oratory is best directed toward the management of the state as opposed to the solution of strictly private affairs. Consequently, he never felt that the profession of judicial ghostwriter was a sufficiently worthwhile way to contribute to the welfare of the *polis*. In fact, in later years he would downplay—even to the point of denying—this period of his life, saying in his *Antidosis* that he would "never be found to have had anything to do with speeches for the courts" (37) and that he was "not clever at the kind of oratory which has to do with private disputes" (43).

As he grew older, he became more and more disillusioned with what he perceived to be the increasingly petty and self-serving lawsuits being brought before the courts and with the growing number of sycophants and flatterers he observed declaiming before the Assembly in an effort simply to promote their own wealth and well-being rather than the best interests of the general populace and the Athenian state. Unlike the "golden age" of Athens into which Isocrates had been born, as the fourth century progressed, the devastation of the Peloponnesian War began to take its toll on the larger populace as the Athenians lost faith in the power of the state to protect and to provide for them. Consequently, they began to live "more and more their own lives, selfishly pursuing their own business of living *off* the state rather than *for* it" (Norlin 2:101, emphasis added). Isocrates saw the former greatness and Pan-Hellenic dominance of Athens flagging and

was discouraged by the escalating selfishness of those individuals who seemed set on breaking the traditional ties between the citizen and the state rather than on performing civic duties for a more just future for the larger population and for the benefit of the city, and he felt compelled to try to *do* something about it.

Having accumulated enough capital to sustain a comfortable living for at least a short period, Isocrates left the financially lucrative, but personally dissatisfying, profession of logography. Due to a self-proclaimed weak voice and a lack of self-confidence when speaking before crowds,[15] he found that he was unable to fulfill his initial ambition of becoming an influential public orator and statesman. In the absence of serving as a political leader, he felt he could best contribute to the public well-being (and continue to support himself) by becoming a professional educator. He firmly believed that the education of the youth had a direct bearing on the future success of the state[16] and that young men needed to become habituated to and to be imprinted with moral values as well as to be introduced to and to mimic the actions of virtuous adult behavior at an early age. "Virtue," he claimed, "is not advanced by written laws but by the habits of every-day life; for the majority of men tend to assimilate the manners and morals amid which they have been reared" (*Areopagiticus* 40). He hoped that he could educate young men who would go on to become the highly visible political and moral leaders he himself could not be and who would bring about "a wholesome change in the political and moral climate of Greece" (Proussis 56) by serving as prominent examples for the rest of the population to emulate, as in the time of Solon when the leaders of state "believed that the rest of the people would reflect the character of those who were placed in charge of their affairs" (*Areopagiticus* 22).

In approximately 392,[17] Isocrates opened a permanent school "for advanced students, the first of its kind in Europe, to deepen their liberal education and prepare them for careers of leadership in various cities of the Greek world" (G. Kennedy, *Classical* 38). His structured and sustained course of study lasted three to four years[18] and his

curriculum was an amalgam of the lessons he had accumulated throughout his primary education, the practical wisdom he had garnered by attending the lectures of the various Sophists and by performing close readings of their sample speeches and handbooks, his loss of patrimony, his decade of experience as a logographer, and his general sense of the emerging Greek cultural mores, attitudes, and values. His pupils studied an expansive array of topics, some of which probably overlapped and expanded the elementary school's poetry and literacy lessons, but most of which focused on history, ethics, and politics; these were the topics from which the students composed their practice discourses and those which they were expected to continue to study when they left Isocrates' school in order to compose the discourses of "real life."[19] In fact, composition was the central act around which all other lessons revolved. This art of discourse, which would eventually become known as "rhetoric,"[20] was "the art that integrate[d] the other disciplines to form a solid liberal arts education" (Grimaldi 31). The purpose of this education was "the making of the cultivated, informed, responsible mind able to communicate with others on matters of the polis and morality" (Grimaldi 39). Once put into practice, Isocrates' teaching methods proved to be highly successful at achieving these goals, and when word of the successes of his students was combined with the wide distribution of his acclaimed political pamphlets, entrance to his school quickly became sought after by young men from all over Greece and abroad.[21] The graduates of his school eventually included some of the most admired speakers, writers, politicians, humanitarians, educators, and historians of his time.[22] "In short," remarks Schiappa, "there was parsimony between Isocrates' theory and practice. He advocated an active role in the *polis* through which wisdom is put to the service of the common good, and that is what he and his students did their best to do" ("Isocrates'" 55). In the following sections, I will discuss in further detail how several specific historical and social events contributed to the establishment of Isocrates' school and to the adaptation and generation of his pedagogical techniques and principles.

Democracy: Persuasive Public Discourse in the Law Courts and the Assembly

Isocrates' decision to open his school was influenced not only by his own

dissatisfaction with his job as a logographer and the shortcomings he perceived in the

available educational alternatives but also by a political and social situation that created a

popular desire and a practical demand (along with a willingness to pay) for such training.

At the end of the sixth century BCE, Cleisthenes reformed the Athenian constitution,

dispersing the nearly unlimited authority of the elite council of the Areopagus by

allowing the "common" citizens to participate in selected affairs of state. Later, based

upon the constitutional reforms of Pericles in the fifth century BCE, Athens instituted the

Western world's first "true" democracy (Robb 125). The Athenian people were no

longer forced to succumb to the arbitrary edicts of a single monarchical or tyrannical

ruler or to submit to the restricted decisions of an elite aristocracy or oligarchy. Instead,

"the majority of the magistrates were annually chosen by lot from all qualified candidates

who put in their names, so that every citizen had a chance to take his turn in the

administration" (Jones 3).[23] Despite an inevitable disparity between the rich and the

poor, for the first time "power belonged to the *dēmos*, so that the people, ordinary citizens

(that is, adult, free, males) participated in nearly every decision of government to a

degree unknown to any society before that time" (Robb 125). In other words, all citizens

suddenly found themselves being awarded the right to debate about and vote on decisions

that affected their personal, professional, and social lives through the creation of laws and

the financial and political management of the city.

One consequence of these newfound opportunities and responsibilities was an

increased need for "general learning, civic awareness, and capability in discerning issues,

shaping and enforcing arguments, and responding to opposing arguments with effect"

(Barrett 6). Not surprisingly, "rhetoric," or the negotiation of popular opinion through

proficient discourse, quickly became recognized as the main source of political power.

Citizens desiring to acquire such power began seeking out ways to attain greater facility

in public speaking and to learn the conventions and expectations of various audiences. In response, educators and entrepreneurs interested in capitalizing on this need began devising ways to systematize, package, and market techniques for achieving political success and personal acclaim through persuasively constructed and convincingly delivered discourses.

By the time Isocrates had reached adulthood, it had become a commonplace that the Greek democracies were controlled by a speaker's ability to sway the majority opinion. Isocrates was generally a supporter of democracy,[24] and he considered "the disposition to live and let live, to cherish freedom for oneself and respect freedom in others" as "the saving virtue of states no less than of men in their relations to each other" (Norlin 1:xxxiii). However, as I stated earlier, in the years of his limited association with the courts as a logographer, he had become increasingly concerned about the decision-making power being granted to large numbers of inexperienced and poorly informed magistrates and jurors and with their susceptibility to the flattery and insipid discourse being produced by self-serving sycophants. Consequently, he urged his fellow citizens not to "pay heed to those who gratify you for the moment, while caring nothing for the future" (*On the Peace* 121). His growing concern about the gullibility and limited vision of the Athenian decision-makers was a major factor in his decision to open his school. He felt strongly that leaders and policy makers and those who would sit in judgment should be trained to consider carefully the possible long-term effects of their decisions and to recognize "smooth talkers," who were only interested in their own immediate success, and thereby to avoid their oratorical tricks. He theorized that the best way for leaders and other decision-makers to detect and deflect selfish, deceitful, or potentially harmful discursive performances was to study and critique the methods utilized for composing such speeches and then to practice composing their opposite—moral and just discourse. In our present society, learning to detect and deflect or overturn ethically suspect discursive performances is pertinent not only for political leaders and officers of

the court, but for everyday citizens and business people as well (as recent corporate accounting scandals, negative political campaigns, and phone and email scams have made abundantly clear). In a time when power is concentrated in the hands of a few—a few mega-corporations, a few media conglomerates, a few political parties—and "everyday life is less subject to direction by citizens [and] more and more investment goes into front activities by official agencies aiming to engineer consent" (Brown 53), training our own students not only to recognize and be alert to discursive manipulation and misinformation but also to be ready to be accountable for the potential outcomes of their own discursive performances might have the effect of reducing such ethically suspect practices in the future. As Isocrates knew, students must be aware that "it is this very contingency"—that rhetoric may be used more frequently for selfish and partisan gain than for the general good—"that makes our individual participation in the collective so crucial, infusing each of our moves with broad meaning" (Condit 321).

Admittedly, Isocrates had an unrelenting and somewhat naive faith in the powers of suggestion and habit, claiming "when anyone elects to speak or write discourses which are worthy of praise and honor, it is not conceivable that he will support causes which are unjust or petty or devoted to private quarrels, and not rather those which are great and honorable, devoted to the welfare of man and our common good" (*Antidosis* 276-277).[25] Since he had such a firm conviction that one's behavior is affected by the ways one speaks and engages in public discourse, he required his students to compose discourses on (what he regarded as) "great and honorable" themes and hoped that they would continue that practice once they left school and thus serve in turn as examples for others, creating a sort of "domino effect" of honor and devotion to democratic governance and open public debate throughout the citizenry. While we are now more aware that the definitions of "great and honorable" discourses vary widely among our students and throughout our diverse society, it would be useful to have students negotiate and defend their choices of which discourses to emulate as well as their conceptions of the "common

good" and to alert them to the fact that "[e]ventually, we shape our own intentions as they differ from various modeled/emulated perspectives, being better able to do so for having shared the views of others" (Couture 46).

Given Isocrates' own faith in the benefits of imitation, as might be expected, another reason he was so driven to train the next generation of "model" political leaders was because he believed that just rulers must "improve on the social conditions that 'educate' and inform the thought of the private citizen who lives as part of a community" (Walker 133).[26] He warned his students about "the nature of the multitude, how susceptible they are to flattery; that they like those who cultivate their favor better than those who seek their good" (*Antidosis* 132-133). He told them that it was their duty and "the duty of all who care about the welfare of the state to choose, not those discourses which are most agreeable [. . .] but those which are profitable" (*On the Peace* 39), by which he meant most beneficial to the state and to the Athenian populace. Adapting this advice to our own classes, we might want to consider evaluating and assessing our students assignments less heavily on organization, sentence style and syntax, diction, and grammar and mechanics, and more on ethical motivation and potential public outcome.

Unfortunately, as Crowley points out, our current emphasis on the "agreeableness" of the format and language used in students' papers results in student compositions rarely being regarded "as messages that might command assent or rejection" (*Composition* 96). I do not think I would be unfair in assuming, along with Crowley, that many composition teachers read student papers "not to learn or be amused or persuaded but to weigh and measure a paper's adherence to formal standards" (96). Bartholomae also laments the widespread lack of notice or responsibility taken by composition teachers "for the forms of knowledge being produced through [student] writing" ("What" 15). Unlike Isocrates, many contemporary composition teachers feel uncomfortable when asked to evaluate students' characters and the quality of the sentiments they express rather than their mastery of a subject matter, especially when

these teachers are being held accountable by the rest of the institution (and much of society-at-large) for students' writing deficiencies. "Ostensibly," says Crowley, "academics in all disciplines want the required first-year course to teach students how to write. Here writing seems to mean that students are supposed to master principles of arrangement and sentence construction; they are also to learn correct grammar and usage" (*Composition* 7). Certainly it is much easier to grade a student on the correctness of his or her grammar, spelling, and punctuation or his or her use of thesis statements, topic sentences, and transitions than the more ephemeral measurement of the merit, quality, or effectiveness of his or her arguments, particularly when the most promising student arguments—the ones that show real inventiveness and risk—are often clumsy and awkwardly presented and rarely have the chance to be responded to by the intended audience. Isocrates, on the other hand, was not nearly as concerned as we tend to be with such awkwardness in presentation. In fact, he was happy to proclaim that those students who followed "the true precepts" of his program would be "helped more speedily towards honesty of character than towards facility in oratory" (*Against* 21).[27]

However, since not every citizen could afford (either in time or money) the higher education that he and other professional educators offered, Isocrates speculated that the most efficient way for the leaders to educate the masses and those citizens who might be chosen by lot to serve as decision-makers about the differences between merely agreeable discourse and genuinely "profitable" discourse was by presenting themselves as examples of just and moral speakers and exemplary public servants.[28] "Let a single man obtain wisdom," he said, "and all men will reap the benefit who are willing to share his insight" (*Panegyricus* 2). He had great confidence that he could help his students join the ranks of the "wise," by which he meant "those who most skillfully debate their problems in their own minds" (*Nicocles* 8) and those "who [are] able by [their] powers of conjecture to arrive generally at the best course" (*Antidosis* 271) in any situation. He was also confident that once his students had obtained reputations as "wise" men, the crowds

would listen to them with more favor than those who had no interest in pursuing such wisdom, but only wished to profit themselves. Like Isocrates, we can try to help our students understand that their public words and actions will make explicit for various audiences what might otherwise be implicit in their own decision-making processes and that their ability to "arrive generally at the best course" when making judgments will cause their listeners or readers to pay more attention to their discursive performances on subsequent occasions. As Lyotard explains, "the good *ethos* of the judge, far from being the cause of just judgments, is that which can manifest itself only through just judgments" (*Just* 26).

In an effort to motivate his young pupils toward a life of goodness and the pursuit of justice, Isocrates taught them that "the multitude are ignorant of the truth and look only to reputation" (*To Demonicus* 17), so a "man who wishes to persuade people [should] not be negligent as to the matter of character" (*Antidosis* 278). He attempted to condition his students to accept the fact that "the stronger a man's desire to persuade his hearers, the more zealously he will strive to be honorable and to have the esteem of his fellow citizens" since, he told them, "the argument which is made by a man's life is of more weight than that which is furnished by words" (*Antidosis* 278).[29] Even though as a lifelong member of the educated elite Isocrates was generally suspicious and skeptical of the ignorance and susceptibility of the "mob," and even though he warned his students about how easily an audience (whether common or cultured) could become entranced and seduced by flattering and pleasant words, Isocrates also genuinely believed in the natural instinct of most people to place a greater weight on a speaker's reputation than on his skill with words—on what the discourse *accomplished* rather than how well it was *constructed*, as I mentioned earlier. In the long run, he insisted, most people would not recall the particulars of any given oration, but they generally would not fail to be impressed or repulsed by the actions taken by the audience members based on the speaker's publicly expressed opinions and the subsequent consequences to themselves

and their communities that resulted from the successful delivery and audience agreement with those opinions. This principle would hold true, he suggested, in the general interactions of daily business and family life as well as before the magistrates and jurors.

As might be expected, in the new Greek democracies, facility in oratory was pragmatic not only for civil matters but also for legal affairs. In fact, according to Kevin Robb, the courts were of even greater importance than the Assembly "for they could, and often did, bring to political and financial ruin even the most powerful political figures in Athens" (125). Like the magistrates in the Assembly, "juries were empaneled by lot for each case from a body of 6,000 citizens annually chosen by lot, and decided not only private cases but political issues" (Jones 4). In addition, according to the law, each citizen was required to represent himself as either prosecutor or defendant in court and was given a certain amount of time (measured by a water clock) to present his case before hundreds of jurors. Of course, not every defendant called before the court had either the ability or the confidence to present his case convincingly, so an increasing number of litigants, similar to those individuals interested in pursuing political success, sought out either speech writers like Isocrates and Lysias to compose their speeches for them and then memorized them in time to present them in court, or attended the lectures and demonstrations of "experts" in the field to familiarize themselves with the most prevalent commonplaces used in courtroom speeches and their basic structures and conventions. Eventually, the technology of writing was exploited to produce simple and widely distributable sample speeches as well as lessons on the systematic production of (guaranteed!) successful orations.

The Development of Rhetorical Handbooks

The somewhat mythic figures Corax and his pupil Tisias[30] were among the first such "experts" to begin training inexperienced and anxious litigants forced into court due to widespread land disputes in the fledgling democracy of Sicily. As such, they are

traditionally considered to be the "founders" of "rhetoric" in approximately 476 BCE.[31] Corax and Tisias also were allegedly the first to formalize and to teach the various parts or sections of argumentative discourses, and Corax in particular is often associated with developing the "doctrine of probability" or the suggestion that given any particular disputed case (which necessarily has at least two sides) one of the two propositions is more likely to be true than the other.[32] Even if Corax and/or Tisias was/were not the first,

> certainly by the 470s it had become clear that the objective of a speaker was persuasion, that a given speech might be analyzed as to its parts (introduction, narration of background, proof, and so forth), and that an audience would at least sometimes accept probability as a supporting proof when deciding whether or not to believe a speaker. (Murphy, "Origins" 7)

Just as certain was the fact that a necessity had arisen for numerous individuals to learn to employ such speeches and persuasive techniques.

As stated earlier, not everyone could afford to hire a logographer; many more, however, could at least observe the demonstrative lectures which were becoming increasingly available for a relatively small attendance fee. Those who were less wealthy, but literate, also could purchase written copies of sample speeches or lists of commonplaces to read, study, and imitate and could circulate them among their friends and relatives. These sample speeches and lists of the basic building blocks with which to construct a speech (particularly, as necessity demanded, for court orations) came to be known generally as *technai*. Since these handbooks primarily contained examples and "formulas," they lacked "the analytical metalanguage characteristic of later rhetoric, and with it the ability, either to formulate general principles governing the use of discourse, or relate them to particular instances" (Cole 92). Such "handbooks," in other words, did not take into account the principle of *kairos* (what is opportune at the moment) or provide an understanding of how or when it was appropriate to put their materials into practice.

Instead, like many contemporary writing handbooks, they contained uncontextualized model speeches and offered overgeneralized "rules" for composition. Undoubtedly, many of the ancient Greek users of these texts ran into the same problem our students have when they try to be "generalized" writers and try to sound authoritative for a "general" audience; that is, they frequently must have composed weak discourses made up of limited ideas or written stylistically pleasing or formally correct discourses that essentially stated or proved nothing of social or political consequence.

Not only did the ancient handbook exercises not take into consideration the importance of rhetorical context, but no attempt was made to form or to judge the morality of the composer or his objectives either. As George Kennedy explains, "[w]riters of handbooks usually have not regarded it as part of their task to tell a prospective speaker what cases to undertake or what should be the limits of legitimate appeal to an audience. They imply success if the rules are followed and usually do not insist on [even conditional or situational] truthfulness" (*Classical* 23). For this reason, among others, those instructors who based their educational programs primarily on the use of such handbooks were criticized by later pedagogues, including Isocrates.

Isocrates objected to handbooks for several reasons. In the first place, he was critical of the attempt to formulate universal rules for "successful" discourse regardless of the circumstances of the audience or the particular situation in which the discursive performance was to take place. He denounced those (such as Corax and Tisias) who attempted to "undertake to transmit the science of discourse as simply as they would teach the letters of the alphabet, not having taken the trouble to examine into the nature of each kind of knowledge" (*Against* 10). As we have seen, after the loss of his patrimony, Isocrates had become acutely aware of the fluctuating and uncertain nature of all human situations. Therefore, while he agreed that "the art of using letters remains fixed and unchanged, so that we continually and invariably use the same letters for the same

purposes," he just as adamantly insisted that "what has been said by one speaker is not equally useful for the speaker who comes after him" (*Against* 12).

This is not to say that he did not understand and accept the need to begin instruction in the art of discourse with general precepts like the typical parts of a speech (which, of course, would themselves vary in different localized and situational contexts) and the different genres of discourse or that he overlooked the practical necessity to have something one, as a professional educator, could point to as concrete and "teachable." He did in fact integrate these basic concepts into his curriculum, proclaiming that "the teacher, for his part, must so expound the principles of the art with the utmost possible exactness as to leave out nothing that can be taught" (*Against* 17). Likewise, I am not recommending that contemporary writing instructors completely do away with instruction in the "basics" of mechanics and organization. What I am arguing is that more emphasis needs to be placed on the situated contexts of discursive performances and on recognizing and adapting to the local and contingent rules of various "language games" rather than implying, as many of us currently do either directly or through the use of standardized grading sheets, that the knowledge and application of a prescriptive set of generalized rules will be sufficient, appropriate, and effective in every case, regardless of variances in the context or situation.

As the only teacher in his school, Isocrates "first instructed his students theoretically, present[ing] to them the various kinds of discourse, and explain[ing] their form and content and the proper composition for each kind" (Proussis 60). However, he also recognized that the rules and examples in themselves were not sufficient to form a pupil's critical judgment or to make him "resourceful in discovering the possibilities of a subject" (*Against* 15). In other words, Isocrates did not deny that certain basic building blocks and generic conventions existed and could be disseminated by an instructor and memorized by pupils, but he was not content to stop there. He argued that a speaker was less likely to decrease the randomness of chance or increase his ability to reach an

informed judgment by learning only these basic elements, especially from a sterile and overgeneralized handbook. Isocrates admitted that his course in "rhetoric" consisted of "some sort of teachable knowledge," but at the same time he did not want it "to be held to the rigorous standards of a typical techne" (Roochnik 288). Instead, he insisted that extended training and practice—both in the classroom and outside in the public arena—conducted under the tutelage of an experienced instructor was essential because only such an (inter)active and practical education could make speakers "more skillful and more resourceful in discovering the possibilities of a subject" or teach them "to take from a readier source the topics which they otherwise hit upon in haphazard fashion" (*Against* 15).

According to Isocrates, "to obtain a knowledge of the elements out of which we make and compose all discourses is not so very difficult" (*Against* 16) and therefore this knowledge could be taught and learned by most anyone. On the other hand, if a young man desired to learn how "to choose from those elements those which should be employed for each subject, to join them together, to arrange them properly, and also, not to miss what the occasion demands but appropriately to adorn the whole speech with striking thoughts and to clothe it in flowing and melodious phrase" (*Against* 16),[33] he needed to associate with and receive criticism from an experienced teacher and to devote long and toilsome hours to study and to practice, and he needed to test his skills and confidence before real audiences while still in school. Because Isocrates' version of general education in discourse depended on "the continual interaction of [the teacher and] the student and on challenges to mind and sensibility" (Welch, *Electric* 69), it required a sustained and lengthy course of study and a stationary location. As he told one of his students, "study will show you the way, but training yourself in the actual doing of things will give you power to deal with affairs" (*To Nicocles* 35). It is this power to deal with everyday volatile and contingent political and social affairs, not just the relatively structured environments of the classroom and the boardroom, that we need to

reemphasize and openly discuss in our classes today, and this is one reason why Isocrates provides such an apt model to whom we may turn.

In addition, Isocrates reasoned that because there are a limitless number of contingencies in any human situation, "no system of knowledge can possibly cover [them]" (*Antidosis* 184). Therefore, in the absence of an exact knowledge or science of what to do in each situation, the instructor should begin by making his students "conversant with" the basic *technai* and then, more importantly, "set them at their exercises, habituate them to work, and require them to combine in practice the particular things which they have learned, in order that they may grasp them more firmly and bring their theories into closer touch with the occasions for applying them" (*Antidosis* 184). This statement suggests that he believed that his students could learn best through experience and practical application to be ready to seize the advantage and to adjust their *logos* for the particular time, place, and circumstances of any given situation. As Isocrates soon discovered, such flexibility could not be learned sufficiently by rote memorization of rules and commonplaces or by the slavish imitation of someone else's speeches.

When we restrict our own students' written performances to "English papers" and tests of their knowledge of or familiarity with the subjects of their assigned readings, and when we assign them the topics and the genre of discourse in which they are to write, that is, "when our writing classes are based on canned issues, emphasize form before purposes, affirm the centripetal voice, and ignore the personal one, they reveal our preference for teaching books rather than students. And they often as well force teachers to react according to rules rather than good sense" (Matalene 187). Such writing classes often also encourage students to treat writing as no more than a process of quoting sources and filling in a form (e.g., introduction with a thesis statement, three body paragraphs with topic sentences, conclusion, etc.) and to see persuasion as "a largely formal matter of shoring up a proposition with the right kinds of support" (Ohmann,

English 155) and to regard an argument as a lifeless, disinterested "*artifact* built of 'materials'" (Ohmann, *English* 157). However, in a writing class modeled on Isocrates in which students choose their own topics and discover their own motivations and purposes for writing, "the teacher's responsibility is to explain the writer's options [and] to suggest the genres that might be appropriated" (Matalene 187), so that he or she has the greatest chance of being taken seriously, or even of being heard at all.

For example, when I taught a first-year writing class based on Crowley and Hawhee's textbook *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, my students wrote proposals that were sent to the university's Parking Services office about how to solve the parking problems on campus so that students could avoid both excessive fines and tardiness; they wrote letters to the local planning commission arguing against a proposal to close all establishments that allowed admission to 18-to-20-year-olds at midnight; and they wrote and published letters to the editor of the local newspaper that argued for bike lanes and supported the D.A.R.E. program in local public schools. In each of these cases, the students and I worked together to determine what they were motivated to write about, what they could write about, and how they could get people to pay attention to what they said. As they were gathering their support, they not only spent time in the library, but they also spent time talking to and interviewing members of the provisional communities who were affected by the issues they had chosen to write about—on the campus and out in the larger community. Finally, many of the students were gratified to see their letters published or to receive responses back from the organizations to which they had written, and they got excited about writing in a way I had not seen happen among my students in more "traditional" first-year writing classes. Best of all, some of the students even got the sense that their discursive performances contributed to the subsequent actions that were taken by their intended audiences, while their classmates began to investigate why their discursive performances did not seem to generate any actions at all; their writing, that is, had come alive, and many of them had overcome the sense of dread and drudgery

that they had formerly associated with writing. While we did spend some class time discussing grammatical rules and conventions, these discussions were carried out in the context of the students' own writing rather than as quizzes or decontextualized handbook exercises.

Given the restrictive nature of the lessons in the rhetorical handbooks, it is not surprising that the second major reason Isocrates objected to the restrictive and rule-bound *technai* was because they failed to allow for "subtlety or finesse" (G. Kennedy, *Classical* 125) on the part of the writer. Isocrates considered novelty and creativity to be important elements of meaningful and persuasive prose composition. "Oratory is good," he stated, "only if it has the qualities of fitness for the occasion, propriety of style, and originality of treatment" (*Against* 13). He marveled that the purveyors of handbooks and some of his rival instructors would fail to see that they were "applying an analogy of an art with hard and fast rules to a creative process" (*Against* 12). He did not deny that several comparable situations could arise which required similar discourses; neither he did require his students to "shun the subjects upon which others have spoken before" (*Panegyricus* 8-9). On the contrary, what he attempted to teach them to cultivate was "the ability to make proper use of [common subjects] at the appropriate time, to conceive the right sentiments about them in each instance, and to set them forth in finished phrase" (*Panegyricus* 9-10).[34] Such talent, in Isocrates' opinion, constituted practical wisdom— "the place where intellect and imagination, reason and emotion intersect" (T. Poulakos 88). A speaker who conscientiously and introspectively employed his talent and wisdom, Isocrates reasoned, would "not aim merely to make an oratorical display" (although that would certainly be one of his aims), but desire "to accomplish something" as well (*Panegyricus* 17). As Too remarks, Isocrates "ultimately allow[ed] the polarity between utility and pleasure to break down" so that speeches could "be both useful and able to cause delight at the same time" (31). We would do well to break down the dualism between pleasure and utility, leisure and livelihood in our own society, for, as Dewey

said, "as livelihood and leisure are opposed, so are theory and practice, intelligence and execution, knowledge and activity" (306). Isocrates' point, argues Jeffrey Walker, was "not that one should 'entertain' rather than 'instruct,' since his concern [was] how to 'say anything useful' *effectively* to popular audiences" (269). On the contrary, Isocrates' point seemed to be "that an effective public epideictic, whether in verse or prose, must develop and intensify its enthymematic force by maximally amplifying its argumentation and by exploiting as well the dramatic possibilities and the aesthetic force of poetic utterance" (Walker 270).

As he was growing up, Isocrates must have observed that "a bard learned the craft by listening to other bards, trying to imitate them, and accumulating a reservoir of structures, themes, and formulas" (G. Kennedy, *Classical* 6). Initially, following in the footsteps of Corax's and Tisias' groundbreaking pedagogical techniques, Isocrates and other early pupils of the Sophists probably learned the art of public speaking in similar way: "a would-be orator listen[ed] to older speakers and acquire[d] knowledge of past precedent, as well as a sense of rhetorical conventions, formal styles, and what [was] effective" (G. Kennedy, *Classical* 6). Like a bardic apprentice, a young man learning the art of public address would have collected examples, stock phrases, and themes (commonplaces) in order to have them ready at hand should a *kairotic* moment arise when he needed to draw upon them to compose and support an extempore argument. Like his sophistic teachers, Isocrates ideally wanted his students to be able to speak and debate persuasively in any situation, even if they had not had time to carefully compose, edit, and revise a polished discourse—a skill we need to consider more carefully in our current classroom practice of championing writing as a lengthy recursive process.

Isocrates' appropriation of this bardic tradition differed from some of the unimaginative techniques employed by several of his predecessors, however, because he also borrowed (and encouraged his students to emulate) the poets' flair for creativity and improvisation, rather than teaching them simply to stack staid commonplaces (or quotes

from their reading) one on top of the other. This demonstrates that even though Isocrates took the intentions and the outcomes of discourse use very seriously, he also acknowledged and advocated with some favor the entrancing and entertaining possibilities of borrowing poetic devices when seeking to construct convincing prose. He saw that the poets could help him in his quest to teach his students to produce discourses that were meant to "advise or teach or say [something] of profit" and yet also deliberately were designed to "please" them (*To Nicocles* 46).

Poetry: Instructive Display and Heroic *Aretē*

Isocrates probably developed an early fascination with the power and pleasure of language use as a young child when he was constantly hearing, memorizing, and imitating epic poetry at school and at home and was seeing it performed both at private gatherings and at public festivals. He used numerous poetic elements in his prose, particularly figures of speech, and he compulsively avoided discordant constructions such as placing a word ending in a particular vowel directly before a word beginning with that same vowel. Occasionally, he was even guilty of indulging his desire for euphony over logical development and padding his texts with unnecessary verbiage in order to maintain a particularly striking rhythm or a melodic phrase, which has caused some of his critics to complain of his "long-windedness." Such seemingly uncharacteristically immoderate and indulgent behavior indicates that Isocrates almost certainly realized that "the (irrational) pleasure conferred by epic was the source of Homer's power as moral suasion and control in Hellenic society" (Robb 168)[35] and that he saw valid and useful reasons to harness and capitalize on such methods as a way of *both* gratifying the audience *and* leading them to conviction.

In fact, he urged his students not to ignore the importance of satisfying the audience's desire for enjoyment, but also not to succumb to it at the expense of their larger moral objectives. He challenged them to compose discourses that were "more akin

to works composed in rhythm and set to music than to the speeches which [were] made in court," to "set forth facts in a style more imaginative and more ornate, [to] employ thoughts [. . .] more lofty and more original," and to "use throughout figures of speech in a greater number and of more striking character" (*Antidosis* 47). One reason he encouraged his students to include such echoes of poetry in their prose was because he recognized that most of his fellow citizens serving on juries or as magistrates had become accustomed to the presence of oral eloquence in public life and were therefore used to receiving most of their socially acceptable moral standards—upon which they subsequently based their ethical and political judgments—through listening to the pleasurable lyrics of poetry. We, too, should encourage our students to study the style and the rhetorical tropes and figures used by respected "popular," "scholarly," and "literary" writers and speakers and to cultivate an awareness of those with the most enduring resonance in the addressed community in order to increase both the pleasure and the persuasiveness of their own texts. In fact, since the Isocratean classroom that I am proposing is, in many ways, more of an attitude than a specific curriculum, the concepts of civic engagement I am outlining here could even be put into action in courses that focus primarily on literature and writing about literature or courses that focus on fiction writing. Isocrates certainly knew that literature and poetry had a substantial impact on the thoughts and actions of citizen subjects.

Prior to and alongside the flourishing of "rhetorical" public discourse and the establishment of written laws in the fifth century BCE, instruction in the epics served as the primary "textbook" of culture and social habit. Unlike poets of the modern era, the archaic poets "were looked upon primarily, not as literary artists, but as moral preceptors" (Walden 11).[36] We can see an example of such social expectations in Aristophanes' drama *Frogs* when the poets Aeschylus and Euripides are judged "in terms of what they can do to assist the city by way of political and moral guidance" (Havelock, *Literate* 278) rather than on the beauty of their poetry. Since "the songs of Homer and

the odes of the rhapsodes were all directed toward praise of virtue over vice" (Enos, *Greek Rhetoric* 39), an ancient teacher "would be sure to find, in reading [and reciting] with his pupils the Homeric poems, abundant opportunity to inculcate lessons of morality based on the actions and words of the gods and heroes" (Walden 11).[37] According to Ekaterina Haskins, "by identifying with what fictional and historical characters say and do, a student grasps the repertoire of social roles and the range of situations more fully than does a person who receives lessons in moral philosophy without 'living' its principles" (21). Certainly, with such classes as "multi-cultural" literature, "women's" literature, "queer" literature, and "post-colonial" literature (to name a few), we also carry an expectation that the fictional and historical characters our students encounter and engage with can perform similar social and educative functions. While these lessons (both overt and subtle) might not have been taken seriously or might even have been rebelled against by some ancient students (just as they are today), they were clearly influential in the development of Isocrates' own moral character as well as his later emphasis as a teacher on the importance of knowing the context in which one was speaking and of exemplifying moderate and ethical behavior.

Isocrates often alluded to the moral lessons of the gods and heroes when dispensing advice to his pupils. As he told Nicocles, "a number of the poets of earlier times have left precepts which direct [us] how to live" (*To Nicocles* 41). Like Phoenix, the legendary teacher of Achilles, Isocrates desired to teach each of his students to be both a "speaker of words and a doer of deeds" (*Iliad* 9.443). As much as Isocrates was aware of and had faith in the morally-enhancing power of eloquently delivered words themselves, he also insisted that words should not be abandoned and allowed to dissipate at the conclusion of a delivery or performance, but should lead to *action*, both by the speaker and the audience. This is a practice we need to renew in our own classroom practices; that is, we need to design writing assignments that are performed by our students not just for the purpose of attaining a grade and are then discarded and forgotten,

but writing assignments that are meant to produce discursive products that are distributed to public audiences and that are meant to prompt public actions—assignments for which students not only have to be responsible to themselves for the consequences (their grades) but also have to be accountable to the public for the social and material consequences of their publicly expressed and distributed opinions.

Furthermore, as we have seen, Isocrates regarded a speaker's public actions and his reputation as having the foremost effects on the reception of his speaking. Homer had taught him this lesson too: "the effective Homeric orator must have authority. It comes partly from a position in society by birth, but must be bolstered by what he has done, by how he carries himself" (G. Kennedy, *Classical* 7). Isocrates undeniably had the aristocratic tendency to associate authority and natural ability most often with high birth, but he also did not discount the fact that authority and ability could be developed by hard work and practice as well as by a parity between a speaker's words and his actions. After all, even some of the Homeric heroes overcame initially humble circumstances! With our current educational standards of "no child left behind," "lifelong learning," "critical thinking," and "political correctness," these Isocratean ideals could clearly have an important impact both in the college writing classroom and in the larger culture.

Isocrates also showed his respect for Homer and his understanding of the poet's continued importance in the moral consciousness of the Greek culture by occasionally deferring to his wisdom and example.[38] However, while he explicitly acknowledged the importance of providing his students with moral examples from the poetic and mythical tradition,[39] he also adapted his instruction to accommodate the new *prose* forms of oral delivery and the increasingly widespread uses of written discourse that were taking the place of the oral epics in the cultural consciousness. Isocrates thus *both* adopted *and* moved beyond the traditional sources of learning by seeking out not only exemplary gods and heroes but also recent historical and presently living models of behavior and discourse production for his students to emulate—models who, unlike the epic characters,

could be observed changing and adjusting to their current times, places, and circumstances. Of such contemporary models, he considered the most important one to be himself.[40]

Perhaps because his own early education was so formative in his subsequent character development, Isocrates closely mimicked the traditional mythic-poetic educational practice that assumed that constant exposure to, imitation of, and discussion of texts and speakers that promoted "proper" moral conduct could not help but have some habituating/imprinting effect on listeners/readers/writers/observers. He proclaimed that "it is easy to imitate the character of [our] fellow-men and their thoughts and purposes—those, I mean, that are embodied in the spoken [or written] word" (*Evagoras* 75). However, Isocrates also understood that it was of no use for his students to keep such exemplary thoughts and habits to themselves either during their schooling or once they graduated from his course. In order for these ethical behaviors to take an effect on the larger population (which was Isocrates' fervent hope), they had to be distributed among his students' households and throughout the commonwealth. As Havelock explains, "while the act of imprinting, considered psychologically, operates upon individual memories, its social function cannot become effective unless these memories are shared" (Havelock, *Literate* 187). In the preceding centuries, social and cultural memories were passed along and shared by members of the commonwealth through the circulation of a common poetic tradition. At the turn of the fourth century, however, we saw that poetry and drama were slowly being overtaken in the popular consciousness by legal and political oratory. It therefore seems likely that one reason Isocrates was such an advocate of writing was because written discourses not only allowed for the preservation of contextualized discursive performances without memorization but also could be circulated beyond the range of any one man's voice or immediate social sphere and consequently could potentially have even broader public influence than a single orated speech alone.

While Isocrates saw many advantages to written discourse, however, he was also aware of the fact that alphabetic literacy was still relatively sparse and that Greece was still primarily an oral culture and, as such, continued to rely heavily on poetic and dramatic performances for moral direction. Furthermore, before the democratic reforms, poetic recitations had been the major forums in which audiences were allowed to draw conclusions and make decisions that would impact the community. Although the poets tended to make the differences between the heroes and the villains fairly clear, audiences would still have been expected to consider carefully the actions of the various characters and to agree or disagree with the poets' descriptions of admirable actions and speeches as a means of constructing and reconstructing their sets of shared values, and the poems' fluid nature would have allowed them to be altered accordingly. In addition, like the mythical gods and heroes who strove to win acclaim in physical contests, the rhapsodes strove to best each other in verbal contests. The audiences would be asked to decide upon the winners of such contests, who would subsequently become the most emulated, and thus the most imitated, poets, thereby effectively becoming the primary arbiters of social values. What this implies, according to Walker, is that ideally the performance and discussion of poetry projected "the implicit image of a community, and a mutually shared public domain, constituted through a process of persuasion and communal judgment enacted in a common discursive space" (271). In fact, because we can find in archaic poetry "a general paradigm of rhetorical, epideictic practice, which is to say a suasory, argumentative, enthymematic practice," he argues, we can consider poetry to be "the eldest, original form of 'rhetoric'" (Walker 267).[41]

Isocrates, like his teachers the Sophists, was interested in adapting this "rhetorical impulse, that is, the disposition to incite to decision and action through eloquence of expression" (Johnstone 4) already inherent in poetic compositions and in applying it to prose discourse. By "giving lectures and writing texts," Isocrates and his sophistic predecessors were among the first to provide "prose as a competitor to poetry as a vehicle

of wisdom and entertainment. These Greek intellectuals shared a didactic purpose, yet were constrained by the practical need to maintain an entertained audience" (Schiappa, *Protagoras* 31). Isocrates ensured his students that if they were successful in composing the kind of prose in which "all men take as much pleasure [in] as in listening to poetry," then most of their audiences would "desire to take lessons in it" (*Antidosis* 47). In this way, citizen orators might become in a sense "*prose* rhapsodes whose discourse constituted both education and entertainment" (Schiappa, *Protagoras* 58). At a time when our classrooms are becoming "multimedia centers" and our students' computer screens function more and more as both their "play" spaces and their "study" spaces, that is, at a time when the lines between education and entertainment are becoming increasingly blurred once again, we can benefit from studying the ways in which Isocrates found value in drawing these events and these purposes and spheres of influence together, rather than attempting to keep them separate.

Due to the shifting social circumstances and the increasing effectiveness of the non-poetic educational techniques of the Sophists and their successors like Isocrates, poetic suasion was eventually largely replaced by a form of prose discourse more closely resembling rhetoric as we currently conceive it. As Cole states, this new "rhetoric" arose out of "a sweeping rejection of the poets in favor of some alternative way of understanding and presenting the world" (29). On the forefront of such sweeping rejection was the pre-Socratic Sicilian philosopher Empedocles. In fact, if Corax and Tisias can be regarded as the mythical "inventors" of the rhetoric of *technai*, then Empedocles (the teacher of Gorgias and one of the first major figures to reject the traditional mythic-poetic ways of inventing and constituting human knowledge) justifiably might be regarded as the inventor of "sophistic" rhetoric.[42]

The Sophists: Humanism and Practical *Logos*

Empedocles' views on the meaningful and useful subject matter of oral

performances and objects of inquiry noticeably diverged from the Homeric tradition by

stressing "man and probability rather than gods and myth" (Enos, *Greek Rhetoric* 64-65).

Like many of the intellectuals of his time, Empedocles was interested in elucidating non-

divine, human ways of knowing.[43] After all, as we saw earlier, with the formation of the

Greek democracies, for the first time the average man, not just the "divinely-ordained"

monarch or aristocrat, was at least ostensibly given the opportunity to be able to use his

power of speech to affect and possibly alter the course of events in his life and the laws

that governed him and his fellow citizens. One result of this newfound ability to take

some degree of control in one's life was the rapid growth of land disputes in Corax's and

Tisias' time and the subsequent popular demand that arose for lessons in forensic

oratory.[44] Likewise, as the idea that internal and international commerce, diplomacy, and

governance could be impacted by the clever use of *logos* began to catch on, there soon

arose a desire and demand for skilled debaters and political advocates and for someone to

train them, too. As Richard Enos reminds us, "most accounts credit the resolution of land

disputes as the reason for rhetoric's emergence as a formal discipline in Syracuse in 467

B.C., but the peace delegations and conferences demonstrate that rhetoric was recognized

as a deliberative source of power as well" (*Greek Rhetoric* 52). The men who led these

diplomatic delegations and especially those, like Gorgias, who also passed along their

deliberative strategies via public demonstrations and educational lectures, eventually

acquired the label of "Sophists."

The Sophists were principally professors of how to use the power of *logos* to

achieve one's practical day-to-day aims and, more importantly, to succeed and get ahead

in the civic and political life of the new democratic states. These wandering lecturers

"did not profess to teach men scientific knowledge or abstract theories but did profess to

prepare men for the active duties of citizenship and to provide them with a broad and

liberal culture" (Walden 345-6).[45] Regardless of what some of their critics professed, not all "Sophists" confined their interests "to the superficial tricks of language expression" (Grimaldi 19) or restricted their teachings to forensic oratory. This is not to say that a "popular but superficial training that aim[ed] only to cultivate a certain rhetor-esque fluency in a handful of civic speech genres" (Walker 33) did not exist. However, the most prominent Sophists offered "a practical curriculum, designed to teach the Greek ideal of *aretē*: the knowledge and attitude for effective participation in domestic, social, and political life" (Barrett 5). In order to meet such ends, they promoted a broad and liberal learning which encompassed numerous topics, believing this to be the best means of preparing their students to speak on a copious array of subjects in a variety of contingent contexts. The Sophists strongly supported extemporaneous speaking[46] and felt that the greater the breadth of the student's education, the more numerous examples and precedents from various fields he consequently would have ready at hand and the better prepared he would be to speak convincingly on any subject (one of the more boastful claims attributed to the Sophists).[47] Undoubtedly, all of the Sophists taught "rhetoric" in one form or another, but they also taught "a number of other subjects, including grammar, literature, mathematics, astronomy, geography, and history" (Barrett 4).

Like the Sophists who trained him, Isocrates professed to be a teacher of political discourse and, also like them, he advocated liberal learning in a broad range of fields because he felt that "competent public discourse requires a large supply of general and special information; for without information, 'the ability to use language' is only the ability to babble aimlessly" (Sledd 145). In fact, he is often regarded by historians and scholars as a characteristic figure in the sophistic movement,[48] and even in his own time he was concerned that he would "suffer some harm from the common prejudice against the sophists" (*Antidosis* 169).[49] In order to disassociate himself from this increasingly derogatory public label, he called himself a "philosopher"[50] and emphasized the

uniqueness of his program. For example, he was highly critical of the sophistic

professors who attempted to persuade young men "that if they will only study under them

they will know what to do in life and through this knowledge will become happy and

prosperous" (*Against* 3). In comparison, he did not promise to provide his students the

keys to happiness or prosperity; instead he offered a course in which his students would

have the chance to "become better and worthier if they conceive[d] an ambition to speak

well" (*Antidosis* 275). Since his program primarily focused on the construction of "great

and noble" discourses, according to Isocrates, he was able to "advance [his] pupils to a

point where they [were] better men and where they [were] stronger in their thinking"

(*Antidosis* 185). He also claimed the distinction of teaching only "useful" subjects such

politics, ethics, history, and composition. He did not deny that "astronomy and geometry

and studies of that sort" had a place in education, but he only considered them to "help us

while we are in the process of learning" since "none of these disciplines has any useful

application either to public or private affairs" and therefore can not "lend aid in what we

do [. . .] unless we have elected to make our living from this source" (*Antidosis* 262-265).

He, however, did not teach such courses at his school because he primarily was interested

in teaching students who desired more than simply to learn to make a living.

     While many of us might now agree that "astronomy and geometry and studies of

that sort" *do* have everyday applications even for those of us who do not necessarily

make use of them to succeed in our daily employment, I would argue that these types of

highly specialized disciplinary studies have been allowed to gain precedence in American

higher education to the detriment of such everyday "useful" subjects as ethics and

composition. For instance, an undergraduate math major may only be required to take

one, or at most two, writing courses over eight semesters, and, should he or she go on to

graduate study in that field, may never take another writing course again—let alone an

ethics or a political science or civics course. However, if we were to renew the educative

principles of Isocrates and restore the value and consistent study of "practical" or

"liberal" courses in the American academy, I believe that many more students might begin once again to consider the role higher education has in forming them as active and engaged public citizens and not just individual workers and consumers.

In general, Isocrates distinguished himself from the more "typical" population of Sophists (who themselves cannot be strictly or categorically defined) by establishing a permanent school with a protracted course of study, by teaching a type of politics that was more explicitly concerned with ethics than with personal ambition, and by asserting that he was more interested in improving his students' characters than providing them with the skills that would "guarantee" their success in speaking.[51] When advertising for his school, Isocrates stated that he was looking for young men who would "want to do some good in the world." Such men, said Isocrates, "must banish utterly from their interests all vain speculations and all activities which have no bearing on our lives" (*Antidosis* 269). "Whom, then, do I call educated, since I exclude the arts and sciences and specialties?" he asked, those "who manage well the circumstances which they encounter day by day, and who possess a judgment which is accurate in meeting occasions as they arise and rarely misses the expedient course of action" (*Panathenaicus* 31). Because his program arose out of a desire to "compensate for the lack of enlightened statesmanship and mindful citizenship apparent through Hellas in the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War," Isocrates took great pains to link his teaching "to the articulation of wise governance and civic conscience" (J. Poulakos, "Early" 317). I think that it is about time we begin to do the same, before the civic mindfulness that came about as one of the aftereffects of "9/11" fades completely from our national conscience.

Isocrates was not only anxious to distance himself from the Sophists because they were his competitors for students and made "greater promises than they [could] possibly fulfil" (*Against* 1) but also because of the general public sentiment that many of these instructors promoted winning an argument for its own sake above all else, regardless of whether the speaker's case was ethically just or civically conscientious or not.

Furthermore, as John Poulakos points out, "the sophistical program grew out of the need to fill the seats of power created by the political reforms that had brought an end to tyranny and aristocracy. It was a program driven by demand and designed to satisfy *personal ambition*" ("From" 317, emphasis added). Consequently, the Sophists as a group became morally suspect, since it was generally recognized that once an individual adopted the single-minded goal of attaining personal success at any cost, such an attitude could easily override his morality or logic, as well as his concern for his fellow citizens. Even so, as you might expect, although the Sophists were widely criticized, numerous students sought these teachers out in an effort to obtain personal promotion and distinction and to try to capitalize on the possibilities offered by the atmosphere of democracy, equality, and "each man for himself." The opponents of this "sophistic" approach to training in rhetoric (such as Isocrates) accused its promoters of "indifference to the inherent character or value of the messages communicated so long as they [were] put across effectively" (Cole ix) and of providing "an opening for self-aggrandizement" (G. Kennedy, *Classical* 30).[52] Isocrates certainly leveled these criticisms against his predecessors and rival instructors. This is not to say, however, that he was above engaging in some spirited verbal sparring and some rather shameless self-promotion himself. What he objected to most was the alleged ruthlessness and selfish individualism of the "sophistic" focus on success. But regardless of Isocrates' criticisms of the Sophists, he could not deny the fact that he had been trained by some of the most prominent among them, and he borrowed liberally from their approaches to training young men to become publicly active citizens.

To begin with, Isocrates may never have conceived of the idea for his school had the Sophists not already introduced a "revolution" in education. In the preceding centuries, when the focus was on epic and poetic education, George Kennedy argues that "there was no provision for practice in original composition and no encouragement of original thinking" (*Classical* 33). While Kennedy is assuredly overgeneralizing,[53] and

although Isocrates often criticized the Sophists for encouraging their students to be "slavish" imitators and amateur "block builders," it seems clear that the Sophists' students did compose original orations in which they had to exercise both their judgment and imagination and employ a certain amount of independent thought about politics and ethics in order to accommodate for various emerging and unprecedented legal, political, and diplomatic situations. In other words, the Sophists offered a view of rhetoric as "a science that supposedly developed both the thinking and the expressive faculty together" and a subject in which "the art of reasoning and the art of speech would practically coincide" (Scaglione 12). Isocrates concurred with this view that intelligent thought and eloquent speech are inextricably intertwined. "The power to speak well," he proclaimed, "is taken as the surest index of a sound understanding [. . .] for the same arguments which we use in persuading others when we speak in public, we employ also when we deliberate in our own thoughts" (*Antidosis* 255-256). He, too, understood the art of speaking to include within itself the art of understanding and the art of exercising critical judgment about what one will say or what one has heard, and he, too, considered expression to be a way of working out ideas, rather than simply articulating existing and fully formed thoughts.[54]

Secondly, as did the Sophists, Isocrates encouraged his students to be critical and innovative thinkers and to use the persuasive force of *logos* to their advantage. He generally agreed with the Sophists about the considerable amount of power wielded by public speakers and the ability of *logos* to direct the course of human events. In his "hymn to logos," he portrayed the power to persuade as a gift of the gods that allowed men to lay down laws and form cities and invent arts. "Generally speaking," he remarked, "there is no institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us establish" (*Nicocles* 6). The older Sophists and pre-Socratic philosophers like Protagoras were largely responsible for initiating such ideas and enabling others to see that human beings indeed lived in a world in which they could affect changes and pass

and enforce judgments through the power of *logos*, rather than a world ruled by the capriciousness of gods, and that they also lived in a world in which any citizen (albeit in the restricted male sense), rich or poor, could attain political office, make laws, and dole out rewards and punishments. Once such a radical world view had been introduced, it seems inevitable that certain time-honored principles would begin to be critiqued.

In their quest to find new ways of discovering and communicating or sharing human experiences and man-made knowledge, the Sophists certainly encouraged their students to question traditional values. As a consequence, they were considered dangerous by many of the more established and conservative citizens who still clung to their aristocratic prejudices because the Sophists' "vigorous presentation of paradoxes and controversial moral views" clearly "illustrated the potential of rhetoric for social change" (G. Kennedy, *Classical* 30). Although the fact that the Sophists charged fees for their lectures and services meant that most of their students were already fairly prestigious and well-to-do, they also claimed that "all people" were "able to learn how collaboratively to govern a city and nobility of birth and high economic status [were] irrelevant" (McComiskey, *Gorgias* 20). Isocrates himself even stated that "whether men have been liberally educated from their earliest years is not to be determined by their courage or their wealth or such advantages but is made manifest most of all by their speech" (*Panegyricus* 49). Therefore, the potential existed for any citizen to seek out a liberal education and not only learn methods to increase his chances of attaining personal wealth and power but also to question whether his "proper" station in life really was assigned to him by some sort of divine ordinance. Many of the early Sophists, as well as Isocrates, felt as Lyotard did that "there is no politics if there is not at the very center of society, at least at a center that is not a center but everywhere in the society, a questioning of existing institutions, a project to improve them, to make them more just" (*Just* 23).

In the case of the Sophists, "the primary function of logos [was] *critical*. In this capacity, it often operate[d] so as to create a crisis by casting doubt on and overthrowing

the established realities." In the case of Isocrates, however, "the principal function of logos [was] *constructive*. Insofar as it [could] shape social reality, logos work[ed] so as to build necessary institutions and create human communities held together by common beliefs" (J. Poulakos, "Early" 315, emphasis added). This may help to explain why Isocrates, rather than his sophistic predecessors, took the first step to institutionalize education and why he was so focused on discourses designed to strengthen and fortify the Pan-Hellenic and Athenian communities. Yet even though Isocrates tended to be more conservative and more reverential toward the deities and social institutions than were many of the Sophists, he was not opposed to raising disparate or nontraditional points of view. He was aware of the fact that "an individual, above all a writer, can invoke and comply with a dominant cultural language, but at the same time also subvert and question it" (Too 234). Isocrates urged his students to begin to form their opinions by studying precedents and examples from the past,[55] but he also urged them not to be reluctant to "alter and change" public ordinances and institutions, for example, that were "not well founded" (*To Nicocles* 17). "Progress is made," he told Evagoras, "not through the agency of those that are satisfied with things as they are, but through those who correct, and have the courage constantly to change, anything which is not as it should be" (*Evagoras* 7). In this way, he helped his students understand that "while narratives and hymns must provide a historical and cultural context out of which deliberation emanates, they must also be used in a way that allows for change in the present and meets the particular demands of insight and judgment that the present situation makes" (T. Poulakos 92). He argued further that honest men "do not remain fixed in opinions which they have formed unjustly, but are in quest of the [provisional] truth and are ready to be convinced by those who plead a just cause" (*Antidosis* 170). In other words, "honest" men are not unwilling to change their minds.

In our own teaching, we need to supplement the classical teachings of Isocrates with the modern insight of such theorists as Lyotard who, while he agrees that "the

rhetorician, the orator, the poet, etc., is precisely the one who seeks to produce effects upon the other," the other "does not control" these effects (*Just* 4) and, furthermore, "communication simply does not obtain because the value system is not sufficiently stable for a work to be able to find its appointed place and to be assured of a hearing" (*Just* 10-11). Even so, admits Lyotard, "there is always some talking to be done" (*Just* 17); that is, words and texts must be exchanged, and minds may be changed. As Lyotard explains, "I may change my mind about a judgment I judge. But if I am asked by what criteria do I judge, I will have no answer to give. Because if I did have criteria, if I had a possible answer to your question, it would mean that there is actually a possible consensus on those criteria" (*Just* 15), which might have possibly been the case in classical Athens, but is no longer a real possibility. Yet even in a modern world that lacks a stable system to guide judgments, a world in which "one is without criteria" and it is no longer a matter "of reflecting upon what is just or unjust against the horizon of a social totality, but, on the contrary, against the horizon of a multiplicity or of a diversity" (*Just* 87), one still has an ethical obligation "to judge case by case" (*Just* 47) and to regulate oneself "upon the imagining of the effects, upon a sort of finality. It is the imagining of the effects of what one will decide that will guide the judgment" (*Just* 65).

As did Lyotard, Isocrates believed that every citizen had "the responsibility of listening, of lending oneself to obligation" (*Just* 66) and of engaging in continual public debates about the just and unjust. As I mentioned earlier, he felt that a well-functioning democracy depended on the ability to influence the opinions of others and the willingness to allow one's own opinions to be altered. "Even the gods," he said, made decisions by "debating among themselves" (*Antidosis* 2). Like his sophistic teachers, Isocrates encouraged his students to exploit the democratic freedom to inquire and to change existing conditions. However, as suited his tendency to emphasize ethical considerations more stringently than his predecessors, he additionally made it clear that it was not the institution of democracy itself, but an individual citizen subject's ethical obligation to

others as a member of a community who cherishes the freedom of others no less than her own individual freedom that "secure[d] the conditions of freedom by teaching citizens to stand up against those who would oppress them, to restrain their destructive passions, and to respect each others rights" (West 12). Although Isocrates may not have respected the rights of women, slaves, and non-Greek "barbarians," we need to encourage our own students to respect the rights of those individuals or minorities who resist the Isocratean goal of working for the construction and maintenance of the democratic *polis* or other socially constructed institutions or who may not be interested in playing the predominant language games.

In this chapter, I have shown how specific personal and educational experiences Isocrates had as a child and as a young adult and the contingent historical circumstances that hastened his independent adulthood contributed significantly to his choice of the teaching profession and to his pedagogical methods and goals. As in fourth-century Athens, when Isocrates was developing his institutional mission, many of our current students "seem neither to understand what democracy is all about nor to accept their individual responsibilities to make it work" (Astin 44) or, on the other hand, how they can thoughtfully articulate their choice to abdicate that responsibility or their refusal to act in the interests of the *polis*—as opposed to enacting a more generally uninformed skepticism and inactivity. Therefore, I have tried to suggest that, like Isocrates, our pedagogical imperative should be to create the conditions for "the ongoing political activity of confrontation, dialogue, and dissent central to democratization" (Giroux 59) both within our classrooms and in the public sphere through the production of our own, and the guidance of our students' public discursive performances. Like Isocrates, we should consider how we can help our students see the intricate interrelatedness of their private and public lives as individuals who are members of various provisional communities, and we should more overtly encourage their active engagement and participation in various discursive performances in the public sphere. And, like Isocrates,

we should take the time to consider how we were taught to write and how our contemporaries are teaching writing and then construct a working model of classroom activities that draws upon the best elements of each of these competing models while still meeting the goals of civic awareness, public participation, and ethical responsibility.

Chapter 3

Alongside and Contrary To[1]: How Isocrates Places Himself *Against* The Ancient Sophists and Philosophers

> Midway between the philosopher's arguments and the layman's objections we find the views expressed by Isocrates, a professional teacher with philosophical aspirations, but also sharing the layman's bourgeois ethics and his taste for practicality.
> —Erika Rummel, "Isocrates' Ideal of Rhetoric"

> The alternative reaction to Isocrates' self-portrayal as a teacher of philosophy is to consider him half-blooded; an intellectual mutt.
> —Edward Schiappa, "Isocrates' Philosophia"

Among the older Sophists, Isocrates was most influenced "by two distinct version of rhetoric: Protagoras' and Gorgias' [. . .] the rhetoric of prudence and civic reform; and the rhetoric of power and seduction" (T. Poulakos 61). Isocrates counseled his students that they could not do without the captivating audience allure of Gorgianic rhetoric, but that they should temper the almost magical and addictive nature of its power with Protagoras' prudence and his focus on civic governance.[2] From Socrates, who was himself considered an early "Sophist," Isocrates borrowed his emphasis on the right conduct of the speaker and his insistence on the speaker's moral goodness. In Isocrates' competition with Plato, he consistently refuted the claim that all rhetoric is empty flattery and steadfastly maintained his position that a broad and liberal education in *logos* was the most effective way to "develop a sound judgment which [can] meet the contingencies of life with resourcefulness, and in most cases, success" (Norlin 2:163) and thereby could allow fallible and inconsistent human beings to make informed decisions and *kairotic* judgments in a capricious world of limited knowledge.

As we saw in the last chapter, Isocrates was able to establish an extremely effective institution of higher education by adapting to the shifting political and social conditions of his time and by taking his own advice to be like a "bee settling on all the flowers, and sipping the best from each" leaving nothing "untasted," but gathering "useful knowledge from every source" (*To Demonicus* 52). In this chapter, I will show how Isocrates "emerges as an eclectic who takes from the sophistic movement his epistemological scepticism, from Gorgias his notion of poetic style, from tradition his staid morality, from the common man his emphasis on practical success" (Rummel 35). I will also demonstrate that Isocrates excelled *both* as a combination of his teachers and his contemporaries *and* as a distinctive pedagogical innovator (if not so much as a spectacularly original thinker). To begin with, he differed from the teachers of the late-fifth century "in that he [paid] less attention to limited topics such as judicial oratory. He differ[ed] from those of the fourth in that he [fought] to maintain a sense of breadth, content, and pragmatism even in the face of Plato's and Aristotle's attempts to categorize and idealize" (Papillion 159). In addition, he defied (and still defies) easy categorization as either a Sophist or a Socratic/Platonic speculative philosopher. However, instead of viewing Isocrates as being unworthy of notice because he resides "in a no man's land between rhetoric and philosophy" (Bloom qtd. in Schiappa, *Beginnings* 164),[3] I would argue that he should capture our imagination and deserve our regard as *both* a Sophist *and* a philosopher because he *brings together* the sophistic tradition of artful delivery and the philosophical tradition of applied wisdom and takes "a median position between Gorgias' skepticism and Plato's ambitious claim to rational and pure knowledge" (de Romilly 54), or, in more contemporary terms, he stakes out the "middle ground between the severe antifoundationalism of postmodernism and the pseudo-objectivism of current-traditional theories" (Lowe 21). In general, I agree with James Murphy's somewhat reductive claim that while Socrates ostensibly taught wisdom itself and Gorgias provided the tools to achieve eloquence, Isocrates gave his students a useful combination of *both*

("Origins" 8). By only sipping from each tradition, rather than gorging himself on either extreme, Isocrates discovered that he, like Alice, could either shrink or grow taller depending on which side of the mushroom was best suited to his present situation.[4] Through this practice, Isocrates was able to develop *both* a theory *and* a practice of *logos* that "preserved the element of performance, without neglecting the major issues of the day or the audience's welfare" (J. Poulakos, "Early" 318), and he used this theory and practice to design and implement a highly successful educational program that would go through periods of prominence and decline throughout the centuries following his death, but that would always have an impact on future institutions of higher education. In the following sections, I will examine more closely the individuals with whom Isocrates studied and "against" whom he placed himself in order to demonstrate that he is uniquely suited to be a highly useful and adaptable model for renewing *both* well-crafted *and* practically meaningful rhetorical practices in our writing classrooms today.

Gorgias: The Bewitching Power of *Logos*

Gorgias is generally thought to have brought "rhetoric" to Athens during his diplomatic trip as the ambassador from Leontini in 427. During his visit, he quickly became publicly renowned for his stylistic flair when declaiming before both official and ceremonial audiences and just as quickly found himself surrounded by admirers seeking to replicate his success by learning his techniques. An admirer of this charismatic and entrancing speaker himself, Isocrates probably went to study with Gorgias in Thessaly in the period after receiving the news of his lost patrimony and before he returned to Athens to begin his career as a logographer.[5] From Gorgias, Isocrates learned that "the style of oratory should be as artistic as that of poetry and afford the same degree of pleasure" (Norlin 1:xiii). Gorgias' own prose style was almost as lyrical as the poets' since he purposely drew on the rhythmic techniques of the rhapsodes and attempted to emulate their mesmerizing composition and delivery.[6] While studying with Gorgias, Isocrates

came to love "the sound and fury of words and the feeling of power that they [gave]" (G. Kennedy, *Art* 175).

Not surprisingly, therefore, like his teacher, Isocrates was occasionally criticized for privileging *how* something was said over *what* was being said, or indulging in style for style's sake.[7] However, unlike Gorgias, who can be said to have "appreciated a fine style more than the order of thought and arrangements of arguments" (Ijsseling 27), Isocrates urged his students to compose their discourses with a view toward harmony, "to connect smoothly what follows with what goes before, and to make all parts consonant one with another" (*Antidosis* 11), a common convention of today's prose styles. He also tried to emphasize the importance of moral content above stylistic grandeur in his treatises, and he hoped his students would construct prose that was not only set forth in an "ornate" and "imaginative" style (*Antidosis* 47) that was pleasing to read or hear, but that was also meant to encourage the audience to take the most just action on the matter under discussion. In other words, although he unquestionably agreed with Gorgias that prose should be artistically constructed, Isocrates felt more strongly than his teacher that the speaker's goal of providing serious counsel and advice should moderate his desire to win the audience's favor by overindulging their yearning for an enjoyable experience. Therefore, while he still considered it worthwhile to study poetic examples both for their moral precepts and their engaging style (as we saw in the previous chapter), he viewed the emerging mode of prose argument as being accountable to different standards. Unlike the poets, he told his students, orators should limit their use of the "many embellishments of language" which "lend such charm that even though the poets may be deficient in style and thoughts, yet by the very spell of their rhythm and harmony they bewitch their listeners" (*Evagoras* 8-11) because orators ought to be morally credible and publicly accountable as well as persuasive. In other words, he does not "condemn the aesthetic dimension of rhetoric" completely, since "[i]t is not the power of the spoken word that he questions, but the unrestrained pursuit of individual gain at the expense of

the polis that has become the dominant type of rhetoric in the courts and the assembly"
(Haskins 85).[8]

Gorgias, on the other hand, spent considerable time crafting the melodies and
cadences of his discourses because he felt that the most persuasive *logos* was precisely
that which was able, like poetry, to seduce the audience into agreement by drawing them
under the influence of pleasure. In Gorgias' experience, pure, objective "truth" could not
be known, and, therefore, he did not believe that humans reached their decisions by
referring to some eternal and universal wisdom or through a strictly rational assessment
of the material presented to them through discourse. Consequently, he taught his students
that audiences had to be *made* to believe through *feeling* the entrancing effects of oratory
and that the orator's challenge was to induce an audience's "will to believe" in a *kairotic*
or experiential/emotional truth of the moment. As Eric White explains, for Gorgias, "the
persuasive force of a speech does not derive from its correspondence to a preexisting
reality or truth. Truth is relative to the speaker and the immediate context" (qtd. in
McComiskey, *Gorgias* 23). According to Gorgias' perspective, people could be
motivated to act only by "a leap of faith, the taking of a risk, the making of a
commitment" resulting from "coming under the influence of a belief, a conviction, an
impulse" (T. Poulakos 52). This is not to say that Gorgias discounted logical or factual
arguments altogether,[9] but only that he had greater confidence in the persuasive force of
arguments aimed at influencing human desires and emotions than those meant to appeal
to human rationality.

Isocrates, however, encouraged his students to use all types of persuasive appeals.
He tempered Gorgias' privileging of the emotional by emphasizing the importance of
ethical appeals and he also encouraged his students to read widely so that they would be
able to offer "factual" evidence based on the record of historical figures, past events, and
even fictional characters. Today, as we continue to operate within the legacy of the
Enlightenment and scientific rationalism, we may have a tendency to err too far in the other

direction and to privilege "logical" or "factual" evidence over all other forms of appeal and to see "rational" persuasion "as almost the sole means by which people change people" (Ohmann, *English* 155). In some of our contemporary classrooms, for instance, students are discouraged (or even forbidden) to compose discourses in the first-person or to offer evidence from their own experiences (rather than from their textbooks or other "research materials") as evidence in their argumentative essays. Likewise, appeals to the audience's emotions are sometimes regarded as inappropriate or manipulative, and students are urged instead to "stick to the facts." This can lead student writers to engage in a kind of purely organizational writing behavior as they labor to shuffle around quotes gleaned from "authoritative sources" to fulfill their classroom writing assignments, which in turn serves to relieve them from the obligation of being invested in the outcome of the distribution of that discourse to an audience other than their teacher.

As stated earlier, like most of the other Sophists, and as opposed to Socrates and Plato, Gorgias did not believe that "the Good, the True, and the Just" were static and universal qualities that existed "out there" and were possible to discover. In the absence of such absolute standards, he sensed that the best humans could do was seek expedient solutions based on the most likely probabilities. Isocrates came to share this belief "that truth is elusive and that the appropriate is the most suitable standard of judgment" (G. Kennedy, *Art* 175). Although Schiappa claims that the world as Gorgias portrayed it was "a world of individuals compelled by their private desires rather than of citizens motivated by their collective interests" (Schiappa, *Beginnings* 52), McComiskey's contention that Gorgias' rhetorical methodology "requires a relativistic epistemology that allows for the determination of communal truth through the consensus of many" (*Gorgias* 18) seems to me to be a more accurate description of his general philosophy.[10] It is probable, therefore, that Gorgias, like Isocrates after him, was concerned with accomplishing the "communal greatest good through affective (though not exclusively pleasurable) discourse" (McComiskey, *Gorgias* 28). In other words, his strategy for

moving audiences was "aesthetic, and eliciting pleasure [was] one aspect of it, but the primary goal of Gorgias's *technê* [was] the desired action of the audience" (McComiskey, *Gorgias* 28). Richard Enos also argues that "for Gorgias, rhetoric is the process of justifying answers or propositions to and by a public audience" (*Greek Rhetoric* 93).

The public respect he earned as a diplomat and the real political victories he secured through his public discursive performances seem to provide credible evidence that Gorgias was not just an entertainer but also a civic orator who was effective both stylistically and politically. In other words, he was not just interested in presenting a spectacle or stirring the audience into a frenzy; he understood that oratory presented the audience with choices whose *kairotic* resolution would lead to *real* consequences that would be experienced by *real* people, and he was consequently interested in discovering the conditional "truth" and urging others to act upon it—even though one could never finally "truly know" whether one had acted justly or not.[11] Even so, Gorgias delighted in the fact that "by means of a correct and fitting word and a beautiful and sound speech, people [could] be made to think in a way that [was] desirable and that [was] considered right, and [could] be urged to act in a manner that [could] be *termed* meaningful and just" (Ijsseling 7, emphasis added) regardless of whether or not it was "truly" meaningful or just. He was also interested in "a scientific analysis of language and its influence" and in how one could translate the science of language into a rational and teachable theory "of the magic spell of words" (de Romilly 16). It is my contention, therefore, that Gorgias took discourse more seriously than some critics, both classical and modern, have given him credit for and that he influenced Isocrates not only stylistically, but politically, ethically, and philosophically as well.[12]

From Gorgias, Isocrates learned that an orator has the power to produce certain effects in his audience and can use certain, mainly stylistic, techniques to lure or trick them into agreement with his position "thanks to the shortcomings of human judgment"

(de Romilly 5). Gorgias taught his students that persuasion was at best a matter of deceiving audiences into accepting linguistically-constructed "realities." What he meant by deception was "the artificial creation of sensory experiences through the power of evocative words and the practice of advancing antithetical arguments for the sake of securing probable conclusions" (Enos, *Greek Rhetoric* 79). Gorgias' lectures and demonstrations therefore taught Isocrates and others that "probability argumentation and the use of antithesis" are "logical methods to open up a question or a problem to all of its implications since both are in fact forms of critical analysis" (Grimaldi 19). These forms of critical analysis, however, could not be reduced to rules, especially because "persons with competing interests may disagree on the actuality of an exigence even when they perceive almost the same facts; this is because interest is a component of every exigence" (Bitzer 15). The overriding factor in each situation would be therefore be the *kairotic*, and the speaker who best could seize upon the opportune would win an advantage because the criteria for determining the most expedient action would change with each situation.

Lyotard articulates a similar sentiment when he argues that "statements about possibilities are only statements of opinion. The judge relies upon opinions [. . .]. If he can, and indeed must (he has no choice), judge case by case, it is precisely because each situation is singular. This singularity comes from the fact that we are in matters of opinion and not in matters of truth" (*Just* 27). He goes on to explain that every statement, every discursive performance, "must be understood as a move in a context" in that everything one may write or may have written is always "tactical" and must always take into account the context in which it appears (*Just* 54). Student and instructor awareness and discussion of these close ties between composition, analysis, and judgment, as well as the importance of examining the context of every discursive performance is generally not given sufficient emphasis in our writing classes today, but it could be bolstered by a

(re)introduction of Sophistic relativism tempered by the pragmatic applications of Isocrates.

As we saw earlier, Isocrates echoed Gorgias' claim that the opportune was irreducible to simple rules, proclaiming that "no system of knowledge can possibly cover [all] occasions" (*Antidosis* 184). Furthermore, since truth is always relative, any decision should be reached only after a consideration of the contrasting views and alternatives, or antitheses, but even then—as the skeptical Gorgias warned and Isocrates himself would admit later—an audience would "be fortunate" if they were "able to draw a just conclusion from the arguments of both sides" (*Antidosis* 18). Even so, when striving for justice one is obligated to listen to all sides because in the "game of the just" one speaks "only in as much as one listens" (Lyotard, *Just* 72) and one must make a decision based upon the imagined future effects of that decision (Lyotard, *Just* 65-66).

Overall, "Gorgias's concern with the pragmatics of human communication and its impact in daily, social interaction [was] certainly compatible with the tenets of Isocrates' rhetoric" (Enos, *Greek Rhetoric* 84), since Gorgias argued that "*logoi* alone are often inaccurate representations of real events, and the most ethical judgment is one that looks beyond unreliable present words to prior actions" (McComiskey, *Gorgias* 51).[13] Therefore, it seems reasonable that Isocrates' emphasis on the importance of character was also influenced by and then modified from the lessons of Gorgias. For example, both Gorgias and Isocrates were interested in the relationship between how individuals think and how they express their thoughts and it seems clear that Gorgias' principle that rhetoric "makes one capable to speak as well as to understand what is being said" (Scaglione 12) was developed by Isocrates into his claim that "the power to speak well is taken as the surest index of a sound understanding [. . .] for the same arguments which we use in persuading others when we speak in public, we employ also when we deliberate in our own thoughts" (*Antidosis* 255-256). However, while Gorgias' fragment *On the Nonexistent* demonstrated that he, much like many contemporary postmodern skeptics,

questioned the possibility of communication altogether, Isocrates was much more idealistic and had much greater faith in the mutual intelligibility of discourse.

Whereas Gorgias "admired the fact that man could inspire whatever feelings he wished" with the "easy and powerful magic" of *logos* (de Romilly 22), he doubted that an exact correspondence between the *logos* composed and delivered by the speaker and the cognitive and sensory experience received by the audience could ever exist. Isocrates, on the other hand, insisted that it was within the power of *logos* for men "to make clear to each other whatever we desire" (*Antidosis* 254) and that audiences could be persuaded without the irrational hypnotic effects of Gorgias' more musical prose, and this may be one reason he tended to privilege the contemplative and reflective possibilities of language that was written and read over the more ephemeral and mesmerizing nature of language that was spoken and heard. Unlike Gorgias, Isocrates "does not praise the power of speech for the psychological influence that it can have on an audience and that can be used, at will, for the better or for the worse; he starts from a general view of speech as the privilege of mankind and considers it as the vehicle of thought" (de Romilly 53). In other words, while Gorgias "dwell[ed] on logos' psychological impact on the individual, Isocrates underscore[d] its civilizing influence on society" (J. Poulakos, "Early" 311).

Although it is important to consider Diane Davis's argument that it is "arrogant" to assume that "we might *make* community happen, *produce* it, and/or *build* it" (179), as well as Lyotard's contention that "communication simply does not obtain because the value system is not sufficiently stable for a work to be able to find its appointed place and to be assured of a hearing" (*Just* 10-11), I think we can still hope with Isocrates that some works *will* reach their appointed places and *will* be heard and that, by doing so, they may help to "civilize" us or keep us from engaging in more violent acts of "justice" than the exchange of words. As Wells explains, we need to keep undertaking the labor of persuasion "not because we think that society is transparent to rationality, but because we

know that we will live with the outcome of socially constructed decisions. We do not want them to be determined by force or manipulation" (336).[14] This also means that we, as teachers, need to be willing "to accept the premise that students can take responsibility for serious thought and imagining" if we hope to make the writing classroom into "an exciting workshop for the making and sharing of meanings, a legitimate instance of the intellectual interchange that sustains culture" (Knoblauch and Brannon 73). Indeed, if we want to convince our students that their writing *can matter*, that it is not just an exercise in mechanics and organization or a process of credentialing, I think we must consider with Isocrates that the skill which produces persuasion and therefore establishes a provisional "truth" in a given context is the skill that is essential to maintaining a civilized society. Even Lyotard admits that "I have always given myself as an excuse for writing a political reason. I have always thought that it could be *useful*" (*Just* 16-17, emphasis added). So, it seems that in some ways, some of our most "radical" contemporary thinkers may not be so different from Isocrates after all.

However, while Lyotard and Davis want to ensure that we do not forget the possibility of terror and the exclusionary forces that are always lurking within all discursive performances, Isocrates tended to downplay the dangerous and uncontrollable aspects of *logos*, although both he and Gorgias viewed "rhetoric" as a morally neutral art that was open to potential misuse. "Things do not of their own nature either help us or harm us," Isocrates declared, it is "the manner in which they are used and employed by men" that is "the cause of all the things which befall us" (*Panathenaicus* 223). He also defended the use of eloquent language on this principle, stating that one should not "condemn those means by which one may gain advantage without sacrifice of virtue, but rather those men who do wrong in their actions or who deceive by their speech and put their eloquence to unjust uses" (*Nicocles* 2). Consequently, Isocrates placed responsibility on the creators of discourse, as well as the recipients. He understood that language *does* have *real* effects on the world, and he wanted his students to consider these effects when

producing and distributing their discourses. He also wanted them to acknowledge that every citizen is a social being who is enmeshed in a web of social constraints and commitments and that language functions within a set of local and community norms and, therefore, that all discursive performances finally should be assessed by their social consequences and effects on both the individual and her provisional communities. "[T]he power to judge of what ought to be done is an endowment common to all of us," he told his pupils, and nothing is "of greater consequence than justice" (*Archidamus* 3, 35). Of course, Isocrates was aware that alternative conceptions of justice would always exist, but that it was just these varying definitions that he wanted his students to consider and to negotiate with others before arriving at a decision.

While some contemporary critics might argue with Foucault that Isocrates was naïve to believe that discourse might be "the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject" (*Archaeology* 55), I would argue that he did have some conception that individuals are never self-sufficient but are always already social beings, or, as Lyotard explains, people in language are not autonomous, but heteronomous (*Just* 35). I would like to claim that Isocrates was aware of the fact that depending on the context of a discursive performance and one's audience, certain language games would be more or less effective in convincing that audience, but that "absolute injustice would occur if the pragmatics of obligation, that is, the possibility of playing the game of the just were excluded [from the realm of possibility altogether]" (Lyotard, *Just* 66). It is just this importance of continuing to play the language games of the just that Isocrates emphasized to his students and which we must emphasize to ours. Yes, we may all be interpellated into various selves, and, yes, we may be disciplined by institutions such as schools, hospitals, and prisons, but on a case-by-case basis, our engagement in discursive performances gives us the chance to make decisions and take actions, even if our possible choices are limited by the language games that can be played.[15]

By encouraging our students to participate in and negotiate among the language games of the just, that is, to produce writing that publicly promotes one available choice over various possible others, or that urges them to "link" in one way rather than another, we can hope to push them to work "at the limits of what the rules permit, in order to invent new moves, perhaps new rules and therefore new games" (Lyotard, *Just* 100). Like Isocrates, we should place great value on writing as an *action*, as a way to make informed decisions and to follow up on and accept their consequences. Critical analysis and critique certainly are important, but I agree with James Porter that to "overindulge in [deliberation] is to defer action and, ultimately, to freeze oneself into inaction" (150) and so "at some point the questioning process has to stop to make a commitment, even if only a contingent one" (162). In other words, as Paulo Freire explains, "When a word is deprived of its dimension of action, reflection automatically suffers as well: and the word is changed into idle chatter, into *verbalism*, into an alienated and alienating 'blah'" (qtd. in Porter 151). In my opinion, there is far too much "idle chatter" and "blah" discourse being produced in our current writing classes because our students' written deliberations are rarely distributed in public forums and therefore rarely contribute directly to the outcome of civic judgments. As I suggested in the last chapter, students may indeed be contributing to the justice of society through their participation in reading, encountering, and discussing various issues and ideas in class, but they are not being given the chance to directly take their discourses to the audiences they are asked to imagine engaging in debates with, and they are not being asked to respond and adjust to broadly varied public reactions nor to follow up on and be responsible for the possible consequences of expressing their opinions.

Protagoras: Wise Governance of One's Household and the *Polis*

Aside from Gorgias, Protagoras may have been the fifth century Sophist who had the greatest effect on Isocrates' teaching, although there is less evidence that Isocrates

actually knew Protagoras personally or attended any of his lectures. Like the majority of his fellow Sophists, Protagoras' avowed aim was to train statesmen in civic *aretē*. Protagoras was foremost among those who "believed that virtue could be taught, that men could improve their condition through education, and that competent, educated men deserved society's respect and rewards" (Barrett 10). While Isocrates fully advocated the last two of these tenets, and although he agreed with Protagoras that citizenship is "a construct that maintains a continuous relationship between politics and ethics" (T. Poulakos 32) and therefore that training in eloquence could not fail to take the question of virtue into account, he was more cautious than Protagoras in his proclamations about the teachability of virtue. "I consider," he said, "that the kind of art which can implant honesty and justice in depraved natures has never existed and does not now exist, and that people who profess that power will grow weary and cease from their vain pretensions before such an education is ever found" (*Antidosis* 274). Nevertheless, he did think "that the study of political discourse [could] help more than any other thing to stimulate and form such qualities of character" (*Against* 21). So, unlike the "vain pretenders" he criticized (including, presumably, Protagoras who, unlike Isocrates, seems to have proudly accepted the label "Sophist" and saw no harm in admitting to be one),[16] Isocrates did not go so far as to claim that he could make anyone who came to study with him virtuous, but instead contended that he only could help those with already naturally virtuous tendencies to become even better.

Although his faith in the transformative potential of education may have been less extensive than Protagoras', Isocrates did agree with his predecessor that political excellence and personal excellence (and thus good citizenship) were developed the same way—through training in *logos*. Isocrates theorized that if a student were to "select from all the actions of men which bear upon his subject those examples which [were] the most illustrious and the most edifying; and, habituat[e] himself to contemplate and appraise such examples, he [would] feel their influence not only in the preparation of a given

discourse, but in all the actions of his life" (*Antidosis* 277). Protagoras held a similar view that citizenship was a continuous process of indoctrination and enculturation best accomplished through the study and emulation of carefully selected examples and, indeed, it was through his example that Isocrates began to advocate that the process of training a virtuous citizen should begin at an early age. Protagoras also seems to have influenced Isocrates' attitude about the importance of prominent citizens presenting themselves as educative and ethical models for the greater population since "the multitude perceive practically nothing, but merely echo this or that pronouncement of their leaders" (Plato, *Protagoras* 317A).[17]

However, unlike Isocrates, who emphasized natural talent above all other factors of learning[18] and may have even turned aside some students who he felt exhibited no potential, Protagoras believed "a person was not bound by nature" and that everyone had an equal chance to "improve their lot and social conditions, acquire an education, rise in the social order" (Barrett 13).[19] Clearly, in this instance, we should model our institutions after Protagoras rather than Isocrates. Yet, regardless of their differences of opinion about who was suited to attend their lectures or "enroll" in their courses, Isocrates and Protagoras concurred that *logos* was the power that must be harnessed in order to increase one's chances of improving one's own social rank and status and of improving the general welfare of everyone in the *polis*. As modern day teachers of language analysis and application, we should take that legacy seriously.

Whether he ever actually met him or not, Isocrates clearly carried on the "Protagorean project" to "teach people to control language for the purpose of advancing their private and collective interests" (T. Poulakos 24), interests which Isocrates viewed as being virtually inseparable. Isocrates also may have adopted from Protagoras the tendency to look down upon his rival educators who did not focus their lectures and demonstrations on practical discourse production aimed at developing good citizens but also taught "arithmetic and astronomy and geometry and music" (Plato, *Protagoras*

318E). Neither Protagoras nor Isocrates was interested in training craftsmen or professionals in any field other than civics or politics. For Protagoras, the best learning consisted of "good judgment in [one's] own affairs, showing how best to order [one's] own home; and in the affairs of [one's] city, showing how [one] may have most influence on public affairs both in speech and in action" (Plato, *Protagoras* 318E). Isocrates echoed these sentiments almost exactly, declaring that "those studies which will enable us to govern wisely both our own households and the commonwealth [. . .] should be the objects of our toil, of our study, and of our every act" (*Antidosis* 285). Although our current student population no longer has the leisure (or the desire) to pursue a four-year program intensively committed to civic discourse, I concur with Protagoras and Isocrates about the individual and social importance of such training, and I believe that our students *should* be required to take at least one class per year that focuses on public discourse production, analysis, and distribution (see Chapter 4). Otherwise, as Isocrates and Protagoras knew, our students will be far less likely to acquire the habit of active civic participation or to pass along that habit to succeeding generations and those citizens in their various communities who are unable or unwilling (for whatever reasons) to attend institutions of higher education.

Like Empedocles, Protagoras was also highly influential in the transition from the mythic-poetic to the more humanistic-rationalistic approach to discourse production. To begin with, "in the case of Protagoras, *mythos* became an object of analysis—a text that could be analyzed, criticized, and altered" (Schiappa, *Protagoras* 161). Protagoras' critical analysis of epic poetry therefore "contributed to the ascendancy of prose over poetry as the preferred vehicle of cultural knowledge" (Schiappa, *Protagoras* 161). In addition to transforming poetry into a human object that could be studied and criticized rather than presuming poems to be perfectly composed products of divine inspiration, Protagoras further removed the gods from direct intervention in earthly affairs by boldly proclaiming that "man is the measure of all things—of the things that are, that they are,

and of the things that are not, that they are not" (DK 80A1). By proclaiming that humans rather than the gods held the reins of judgment in the affairs of everyday life, Protagoras was arguing against predetermined and eternal truths and declaring instead that the "truth" must be approximated in each time and place, a view he shared with Gorgias and other pre-Socratic philosophers and Sophists, and one that we have seen Isocrates would eventually adopt, as well.

Just as Gorgias argued against the possibility of perfect communication due to the differences in experiences and understanding always already present between the speaker and his or her audience, Protagoras reasoned that "individuals, each using a unique mind and set of senses, necessarily see things differently, develop different perspectives, and come to differing conclusions" (Barrett 12). Combined with the dethroning of poetry from its previously unassailable perch, Protagoras' man/measure proclamation thereby allowed "conventions and customs" as well as "institutions and laws" to be "understood as arbitrary creations, makings of an ever-pliable language and results of relative uses" (T. Poulakos 24). With his help, people began to see that "laws and customs are derived from social agreement, not from human nature; and they are good insofar as they help people function together in society" (Barrett 13). This proposition clearly influenced Isocrates' argument in his "hymn to logos" that without the power of speech, man would never have "laid down laws concerning things just and unjust, and things honorable and base; and if it were not for these ordinances we should not be able to live with one another" (*Antidosis* 255). However, this also meant that people did not have to accept the status quo because judgments and laws were arrived at by debates among capricious and fallible human beings in specific historical and social circumstances, not handed down from on high, and they therefore continuously could be questioned and changed, not because they would be "moving closer to [their] true nature or telos but because the accidents of history will continually demand creative responses, and these responses themselves will have an impact on future possibilities" (Kasteley 241).

As Jeff Smith reminds us, "It's human nature to assume that most of what the world gives us is just there, not somebody's choice. But coming from students, such a view doesn't produce just isolated fallacies; it also just makes the whole enterprise of college writing something of a puzzle. If things are just the way they are, what's the *point* of sitting down and arguing on paper for one view or another? What good can it do? Who's gonna care?" (205). The current answer usually is that *no one* much cares about our students' college writing assignments in other than a functional way, that is, as a way to certify that they have gained "facility" with the rules and forms of writing they have been taught and assigned or that they have retained some knowledge of the content of their textbooks and lectures. Of course, as I have been suggesting, their retention of such knowledge *can* contribute to their education and actions as public citizens, but the problem remains that students are more often being taught to *read* texts in order to be enlightened or empowered, and they are less often regarding the texts that *they produce* as being able to enlighten or empower others. By returning to an Isocratean concept of discourse instruction as a way to engage students in a continuous cycle of putting "careful thought" into effect and showing the "ability to deliberate and decide," we can clarify for students the reasons we are requiring them to take first-year writing classes and help them see that there is indeed a meaningful and important point beyond academic and job credentialing to sitting down and arguing on paper or in front of a live audience. By using an Isocratean model and heeding his advice that "likely conjecture about useful things is far preferable to exact knowledge of the useless" (*Helen* 5), we can also get our students into the habit of making choices and questioning the status quo and of preparing to be *both* listeners *and* contributing members to the debate and negotiation of social justice, rather than relying on their textbook authors or their teachers or parents or political or religious leaders to make the decisions about what matters to their provisional communities and what counts as justice. These skills, as Isocrates understood, are essential in a world that is always in need of constant negotiation and reevaluation.

The other radical and controversial Protagorean theory that Isocrates borrowed and attempted to make more socially and ethically palatable was the principle of the two *logoi*—Protagoras' claim that there are always at least two contradictory arguments about everything. In order to prepare his students to both defend their own arguments and anticipate and refute the arguments of their opponents, Protagoras had them "argue upon both sides of certain general themes" (Hunt 10). His practice of honing his students' ability to be prepared to argue various sides of a given case, which Protagoras "taught as an objective means of evaluating complex situations"—especially when combined with his avocation of seizing the opportune moment—was "soon denigrated as the ability 'to make the weaker argument defeat the stronger'" (Waterfield 205). Despite its negative connotations and its association with extra-moral practices, Cole argues that even if Protagoras did teach such a technique, "'making the worse argument better' can only have involved—assuming a consistently relativistic understanding of 'better' and 'worse'—teaching a student to think, and make others think, about situations in ways that were better rather than worse for him" (145). I would add that Protagoras would also have taught his students to think about whether the situations proposed would be better or worse for the community as well. Isocrates also acknowledged that "oratory is of such a nature that it is possible to discourse on the same subject matter in many different ways— to represent the great as lowly or invest the little with grandeur" (*Panegyricus* 8), depending on the speaker's purpose and the situational circumstances. As Lyotard explains, "The 'force' of a phrase is judged by the standard of a genre's rules, the same phrase is weak or strong depending upon what is at stake. That is why it is legitimate for the weaker argument to be the stronger one: the rules of the genre in which it is placed have been changed, the stakes are no longer the same" (*Differend* 159).

Isocrates agreed with Protagoras' reasonable proposal that sound judgments about anything cannot be reached without an examination of the opposing arguments since "good proposals are those that survive rigorous debate," especially when, according to

the man/measure principle, "one person's truth may not be another's" (Barrett 12). Like Protagoras, Isocrates taught his students that they constantly would find themselves in situations where they would have to issue judgments in the absence of certain knowledge or make decisions in the face of limited knowledge in order to move people to take the most just action. Isocrates undoubtedly would have agreed with Lyotard that "truth" is not what is at stake in language games, but "justice" (*Differend* 143). "Those who follow their judgments," Isocrates told his students, "are more consistent and more successful than those who profess to have exact knowledge" (*Against* 8). Isocrates also knew that without any stable system to guide one's judgments, there would always be more deliberating and negotiating to be done and more language games to be played; this is the answer we can give our own students when they want to know why they are being asked to write both about issues that seem to be settled and ones that are endlessly debated and yet seemingly never resolved.

Given Isocrates' advocacy of Protagoras' two *logoi* principle, it seems likely that he also adopted Protagoras' pedagogical technique of requiring his students to compose discourses on both sides of a given topic as a way to hone their techniques of invention and critical assessment or judgment. It would be reasonable to assume that for both Isocrates and Protagoras, the point of having students practice composing conflicting arguments was not to teach them how to overturn a moral and just case out of mischievousness or mere spite, but rather to teach them to be ready to adapt to ever-changing circumstances and conditions and to give them a chance to see how compelling arguments could be composed for either side, even in those situations in which one side might at first appear to have an overwhelming amount of "factual" evidence to support its case or when two "honest" speakers might hold contradictory positions. They also would be expected to play the role of audience and make a judgment as to which side should prevail and probably would be asked to imagine the possible future consequences of making a judgment for that side. The student debaters and negotiators would not stop

there though, but would go on to deliver their arguments in public forums in order to experience first-hand not only the acceptance or rejection of their discursive performances but also the *consequences* of those performances within the community. I would like to suggest that our students need to be given more chances not only to read and discuss arguments on two sides of an issue (e.g., affirmative action in college admissions or Internet file sharing) and then to write an argument for one side or the other, an assignment that certainly can be seen as one way of forming opinions and taking a political stance, but that they also need to examine more closely the potential *consequences* of their decisions, and they especially need to be given the chance to distribute their judgments publicly not only to see *if* they receive attention but also to observe the *results* of their publicly-proclaimed opinions when they do get heard and acted upon.

The *dissoi-logoi* were not the only classroom exercises in which the ancient students engaged. In fact, Protagoras seems to have been a demanding teacher who emphasized the value of extended practical exercises. Although he generally is considered to have viewed people as more able to overcome deficiencies in their upbringing or their nature than Isocrates, he did acknowledge that innate variations in talent would exist, and he viewed nature and external influences as of nearly equivalent importance, declaring that "skill [is] nothing without practice, and practice nothing without skill" (Waterfield 219). Even though, as I pointed out earlier, Isocrates placed natural talent above all other considerations when assessing the potential success of his students, he also relentlessly insisted that his students constantly practice composing and evaluating discourses in particular contexts because he knew that talent and practical application would bolster and complement one another in most successful circumstances. Eventually, based on his classroom experience, he reached a conclusion similar to Protagoras', that "men who are less generously endowed by nature but excel in experience and practice, not only improve upon themselves, but surpass others who,

though highly gifted, have been too negligent of their talents" (*Antidosis* 191). His course, he stated, was not able to "fully fashion men who [were] without natural aptitude into good debaters or writers," but it generally was "capable of leading them on to self-improvement and to a greater degree of intelligence on many subjects" (*Against* 15).

Too often today, our students are convinced that writing is something one can either do well or not do well by virtue of genetic predisposition or childhood upbringing or they have absorbed romantic notions of inspired writers being visited by the Muse. As Fred Kemp explains, "[t]he comforting myth that writing is an esoteric presentation device for the especially talented permeates the student consciousness, leading to dull competence in a few and outright somnambulism in many" (192). Given these attitudes, it is not surprising that once our students leave their first-year English classes, they often hope only to be asked to write in order to provide "correct" answers rather than to form and justify less certain, less established, and often internally conflicting opinions. This reluctance to see writing as anything other than a way of organizing and presenting already-existing "truths" is another reason why we need to renew the practice of requiring students to complete at least one course in rhetoric and civic discourse per year—without exception. As Isocrates learned from his own teachers and from observing his students, without constant practice and experience in composing and distributing civic discourses, students are far less likely to improve their writing or to grow accustomed to engaging actively in public debates and contributing to community decisions about the future.

Like Gorgias, Protagoras not only influenced Isocrates pedagogically and philosophically but also stylistically. Rather than advocating the seductiveness of Gorgias' highly ornamented and cleverly metaphorical language, Protagoras tried to mitigate the slipperiness inherent in discourse by encouraging his students to strive for clearness of thought and grammatical correctness.[20] As an advocate of equal opportunity and democratic discourse, Protagoras wanted to make any given speech accessible to the

most people possible. Only in that way, he conjectured, could a truly communal consensus be reached. Isocrates was also interested in encouraging civic participation throughout the populace and in reaching the broadest audiences possible. Even so, as a student of Gorgias, he was more likely to give precedence to euphony and clarity than to grammatical purity. He endeavored to rein in the ambiguousness of language and to avoid the possibility of someone not understanding or misunderstanding his discourse by attempting to make his compositions as straightforward as possible, that is, to try to say what he meant and mean what he said; however, as mentioned earlier, he was sometimes given to meandering around a point if he could make a phrase more harmonious or striking to the ear. Yet, even as he strove to control his language, Isocrates was aware of the vagaries of audience interpretation. As a consequence, Isocrates' ideal speech, as Marrou explains, was one "that [was] easy to read and, on the surface, easy to understand, but [one] in which the attentive reader [could] discover endless felicities, interlaced as it [was] with innumerable allusions to history and philosophy, and full of illustrations and embellishments" (85). Not surprisingly, Isocrates' ideal prose speech shared many elements with an ideal poetic composition and, indeed, he felt that a good speech ought to resonate with the audience in much the same way as a good poem would. Such ideals certainly would be commendable in student writing today and would be a welcome addition to the oft-lauded standards of clarity and correctness.

In the end, for Protagoras and Isocrates alike, the most important motivation of a speaker finally "was to change the state or condition of the hearer for the better" (Schiappa, *Protagoras* 163).[21] However, no matter how often Protagoras and his fellow Sophists professed their intent to improve the virtue of Greek citizens, their endorsement of humanistic relativity, their willingness to teach anyone who paid their fees (along with the relatively low price some of them set on instruction of such import),[22] their perceived overconfidence in the results of their teaching, and their focus on discovering how to win arguments without taking into consideration the resulting consequences usually made

them morally suspect, especially among those philosophers like Plato's Socrates who insisted on the existence of *absolute* principles of Truth and Justice.

Socrates: The Truth *Is* Out There and We *Can* Know It

Despite their different approaches, Socrates and his disciples apparently agreed with Isocrates and Protagoras that "education should be practical and aim at right conduct in private and public life" (Norlin 1:xviii) and that education was "the key to all social and political problems" (Kerferd 138). In fact, as I mentioned earlier, Socrates himself was often labeled a "Sophist" and was considered just as threatening to the conservative establishment because he encouraged young people to ask questions and investigate laws and traditions. However, Socrates was highly opposed to the Sophists' relativistic approach to discerning what could be considered "right" conduct, and he was disdainful of their opportunistic assessment of morality. Unlike the Sophists, Socrates could not be satisfied with teaching his students to do what *seemed* to be appropriate in each instance; he wanted them always to do what *was* right. When Plato's Protagoras tells Socrates that he teaches the science of how to make men good citizens, Plato's Socrates responds that "virtue is not teachable" (*Protagoras* 320B).[23] For Socrates, virtue was a universal concept that could only be discerned by a few select intellectuals working together to achieve *the* right answer through the dialectical process of definition and division, not a set of precepts that could be systematically taught through a series of lessons or lectures to anyone who expressed interest or ambition. While Isocrates agreed with Socrates that teaching virtue or good citizenship was not a straightforward science that could be learned easily from a set of rules, he did not agree that virtue was an absolute concept only attainable by an extremely select few. For Isocrates, virtue could not be taught or delineated by rules because what was virtuous changed depending on each situation. As I have been arguing, this Isocratean concept of *kairotic* civic education and public responsibility fits well with Lyotard's notion of contextualized judgments based on

localized language games and their imagined results and can be used *both* to motivate contemporary writing students to produce writing that attempts to move the world around them to a more just state *and* to be accountable for the future impact of their discursive performances, as well as to be ready to alter their judgments/decisions when they encounter new contexts and new circumstances.

Socrates, however, insisted that definitions and judgments should *not* vary depending on circumstances and he criticized the Sophists' teaching as "unscientific, unprincipled, [and] frivolous" (Schiappa, *Beginnings* 48). Instead, Socrates "taught that truth was absolute and knowable," and, therefore, he was interested in "the universal validity of the answer," not what happened to be a fitting definition "for the moment" (G. Kennedy, *Art* 14). Real knowledge, according to Socrates, "could be obtained only through absolute definition. If one could not define a thing absolutely, then one didn't really *know* what it was" (Stone 39). Although Isocrates shared with Socrates "his logical clearness and his insistence on the proper definition of objectives and terms" (Norlin 1:xvii), he did not agree with Socrates that each concept or thing had only one final and absolute definition. As I have already made evident, like Gorgias and Protagoras, Isocrates was more concerned with relative definitions, that is, *kairotic* definitions for each particular time, place, and circumstance.

Because he did not believe in the universality of definitions (and also, presumably, because most of his discourses were written to be read in the absence of their author), Isocrates made a habit of defining the key terms in each of his discourses as he felt was appropriate for the particular circumstances and as clearly as possible in an effort to minimize misunderstanding. He realized that he could not assume that his audience would immediately share or grasp his discourse-specific definitions (i.e., his particular "language games") and that such differences could alter both the audience's receptivity and the outcome of the proposed course of action. Therefore, he attempted each time to "properly encompass the essence of the whole matter in a general principle," in an effort

to "speak to better purpose about its parts" (*To Nicocles* 9). He certainly must have taught his students to do the same for all of their arguments as one more attempt to minimize the capriciousness of chance or the unintended deception always present in *logos*. However, I would suggest that he also would have made them aware that no amount of care in composition could ensure that the reaction or reception the composer anticipated would in fact occur before every audience and in every situation. As Brown explains, "The author must employ language that is inherently polysemous. The exact range of such ambiguities is given to the author by the cultural tradition and contemporary community of speech in which she finds herself. Given the multivalency of her speech for various audiences, she cannot control all the plausible meanings conveyed by her text" (146). Even so, Isocrates would have told his students, an awareness of and attempt to discern the cultural traditions and to conform to the rules of their target audience's local language games would certainly be worthwhile and could only be to their advantage when seeking to be heard. This Isocratean pedagogical technique of making students aware of the variability of local language games and definitions of "correctness" in speaking and writing is an important strategy that needs to be employed more fully in our contemporary writing classrooms, where one standard of "correctness" is often put forward as universally appropriate, regardless of the intended purpose of the discourse, its target audience, or its mode of delivery (this is less likely to be the case, of course, when students are asked to write in several different genres or for audiences other than the overly generalized "academic" or "educated" audience).

Like the Sophists, Isocrates and his students tended to write discourses arguing for or against specific legal, political, and, yes, even personal actions. Socrates, however, was scornful of "the long-sustained, thesis-driven propositions characteristic of sophistic [and Isocratean] rhetoric" (Enos, *Greek Rhetoric* 99), the very type of writing we most often expect our students to engage in today. In Plato's dialogues, he is constantly haranguing his interlocutors to stop lecturing and to give shorter answers,[24] although he is

not above indulging in long, drawn-out monologues himself. Socrates was most interested in the back-and-forth question and answer of one-to-one dialectic, not what he considered to be the one-directional rhetoric of mass audience address. According to Socrates, the purpose of dialectic was to find "the one correct answer" (G. Kennedy, *Art* 14), which neither of the participants supposedly knew for certain at the beginning of the conversation, but which was eventually arrived at together. He was scornful of those who prepared orations in advance as if they knew the correct answer already, and he criticized them for being unable to say anything other than the statements they had already delivered when questioned or when asked to clarify a specific point. However, as we have seen, the Sophists and Isocrates insisted that their students practice responding to audiences and thinking on their feet. The ability to supply *kairotic* answers was cultivated not only through practice orations in the classroom, but was inherent in the very idea of a broad and liberal education, that is, one of the main purposes of a liberal education was to provide a speaker with a storehouse of knowledge, examples, and commonplaces upon which to draw in any situation.

Another reason Socrates objected to thesis-driven orations was because he felt that they consisted of no more than lengthy opinions. He claimed that while opinions could be delivered in a public speech, knowledge could only be achieved through the constant personal interaction of two people engaged in dialectic. According to Socrates, since "absolute truth both exists and is knowable, then certain principles, deducible from this truth, ought to guide activity" (G. Kennedy, *Art* 14). "Rhetoric," on the other hand, was dangerous because it was not interested "in the universal validity of the answer but only in its persuasiveness for the moment," and yet it could "present some other and erroneous course of action in an attractive way" (G. Kennedy, *Art* 14). Socrates was therefore concerned by the fact that "a good speech [could] impart a set of more or less firm convictions and even achieve a common standpoint or actual consensus" in the absence of "a single criterion to decide whether such convictions [were] correct or to

assess whether the actual consensus rest[ed] on an essential truth or not" (Ijsseling 14).

Isocrates, on the other hand, did not think that any single criterion existed that could

predetermine the course of all decisions or that it was "in the nature of man to attain a

science by the possession of which we can know positively what we should do or what

we should say" (*Antidosis* 271). Therefore, "those who follow their judgments," he said,

"are more consistent and more successful than those who profess to have exact

knowledge" (*Against* 8). In other words, as we have seen, what was at stake for Isocrates

in discursive performances was not the truth, but justice.

In the absence of exact knowledge (*episteme*), it followed that man could base his

judgments only on opinion (*doxa*). For Isocrates, this opinion should not be an

"irresponsible" or whimsical choice, "but a working theory based on practical

experience" (Norlin 2:290). Foreknowledge of the future could not be known, Isocrates

reasoned, but *informed* judgments could be reached by a consideration of various

opinions and an examination of past experiences and precedents. He also believed that

definitions of the "good" or the "just" were created through the exchange of language

between imperfect humans acting in uncertain conditions and without exact knowledge of

either the past or the future, but that was not a reason to despair or to stop continually

trying to make contingent judgments about the "best" answers for a given situation or to

fail to act at all. Socrates, however, "refused to defer to opinions" regardless if they

"were grounded in venerable tradition, poetic inspiration or sincere personal convictions"

(West 10). Not surprisingly, although Socrates was "constantly searching for absolute

certainty in the shape of perfect definitions" (Stone 93), he never seemed to find them.

And, unlike Isocrates, he never seemed to have attempted to move people to political

action either. In opposition to Isocrates' active public philosophy, the Platonic Socrates

preached the wise man's withdrawal from the political life of the city.[25]

Unfortunately, many academics today seem to follow Socrates' example and

withdraw from public view into the intellectual life of the academy, engaging in debates

only with others who possess what they imagine to be the same intellectual vigor. While I want to acknowledge that much of the teaching and learning that goes on within institutions of higher education is undoubtedly political and certainly contributes to the construction of citizen subjects and has an impact on their public actions, I think it is time for contemporary academics to begin to follow the lead of Isocrates instead and to act overtly political and produce more discourses that directly engage in the public life of the non-academic community. Here I agree with Giroux that we need to acknowledge that "higher education, particularly the humanities,[26] [is] one of the last public spheres for open dialogue and debate so essential to the ongoing political education of citizens and the revitalization of democracy itself" (77) and that "this in turn means rethinking the fashionable dismissal of progressive work in the academy as merely reproducing, through the use of the pedagogue as an ethical exemplar, a form of normative regulation that serves the interests of the dominant order" (81). While Foucault may be correct in his observation that "institutions are systems of exclusion both reinforced and accompanied by whole strata of practices such as pedagogy" (*Archaeology* 219), I think we also need to take into account Terry Eagleton's depiction of universities as "sites of contradiction" in which "the conditions required for them to reproduce ruling-class skills and ideologies are also in part those that allow them to produce [critiques]" (94). In fact, it is precisely because Isocratean instruction has more to do "with the polis than the individual soul," argues Janet Atwill, that "it is far more likely to disrupt standards of value than to secure them" (21).

Despite their differences, Socrates and Isocrates certainly shared a concern about the increasing corruptness and selfish individualism they saw around them and they looked to the education of the world's youth as the most hopeful way to reverse these trends. Because our own students are "immersed in a culture of individualism" and are therefore often preoccupied with materialism and "getting ahead" of their peers, they need to be given more chances "to see that there is a social basis for most of the

conditions they take to be matters of individual choice or individual ability" (Herzberg, "Community" 66). Like Isocrates and Socrates, we should be concerned that in our own increasingly individualistic and functionally meritocratic society our students (many of whom are already convinced of their own merit) "will not critically question a world that seems natural, inevitable, given; instead, they will strategize about their position within it" (Herzberg, "Community" 66-67). However, if we use our classrooms and our students use their writing to help them develop a social imagination and a social consciousness, it becomes possible for them "not only to question and analyze the world but also to imagine transforming it"; if we attempt to make schools function "as radically democratic institutions, with the goal *not only* of making individual students more successful *but also* of making better citizens," we can hope to transform our students into what I would like to call "Isocratean" citizens, that is, "citizens in the strongest sense of those who take responsibility for communal welfare" (Herzberg, "Community" 66-67, emphasis added). As Alexander Astin suggests, "A major problem with contemporary civic life in America is that too few citizens are actively engaged in efforts to effect positive social change. Viewed in this context, the leadership development challenge for higher education is to empower students, to help them realize that they *can* make a difference" (42) not only for themselves but also for others in their provisional communities. Rereading Isocrates and incorporating his pedagogical aims in the ways I am suggesting can provide us with just the leadership development we need to meet such challenges.

While it would, of course, be naïve to assume that education alone can alter repressive or exclusionary social conditions or to deny that the institutions where we work are themselves implicated in repressive and exclusionary practices and impinged upon by economic pressures, political agendas, and other dominant cultural forces and prohibitions,[27] I would still argue with Isocrates, Herzberg, Astin, and Giroux that regarding institutions of higher education as vital spaces for negotiation and debate within the broader public sphere, as staging grounds for public *action* as well as places of

knowledge and skills acquisition, contemplative introspection, and research, is not only

necessary for the maintenance of a democratic state, but also an important means of

training students to be motivated to write by their investment in the construction and

negotiation of the communal welfare. This motivation to write and this investment in

community writing would also potentially inculcate them with a habit of active

participation in public life. Therefore, as writing teachers, we need to do our part to

change the current conception of being an intellectual in the academy as generally

meaning "being in the university and holding a faculty appointment, preferably a tenured

one, of writing in a certain style understood only by one's peers, of conforming to an

academic rewards system that encourages disengagement and even penalizes professors

whose work becomes useful to nonacademics or popularized" (Boyer, qtd. in Bringle et

al 2). In other words, although we may recognize our teaching and the writing that is

exchanged between colleagues throughout the academy as actions leading to the

negotiation and formation of a more just society, because these actions may not be

noticed or understood by either our students or the society at large, we ought to consider

following more closely the example of Isocrates, who strove to make his work accessible

to broad public audiences and who overtly tackled the most pressing social issues of the

time in writing that he distributed to politicians, lawmakers, the general public, and his

students, so that everyone clearly recognized him as both an educator and an active

public citizen. As Mortenson explains, "all academic professionals have public duties.

In composition, we can discharge these duties by writing for the communities we live in,

communities likely much larger and more complex than the institutional ones in which

we work" (250). Furthermore, we need to model these more overtly public writing

behaviors if we expect our students to do the same.[28] As bell hooks proclaims,

"[E]mpowerment cannot happen if we [educators] refuse to be vulnerable while

encouraging students to take risks" (21).[29] On the other hand, as Knoblauch and Brannon

point out, "[t]eachers who compose along with their students have no choice but to

implicate themselves in the same messy struggle toward meaning" (111-112).[30]
Although we certainly take risks whenever we write or seek to get published, perhaps it is
time to reincorporate an Isocratean mode of writing into our repertoire and to engage
more frequently in discursive performances that more closely resemble our students'
writing, that more noticeably confront the most pressing social issues of the day, and that
are intended for distribution to broader public audiences. Perhaps it is time, that is, to
reconsider the value of engaging in discursive performances that more closely resemble a
rhetoric of mass address than a more limited Socratic dialogue.

Admittedly, Socrates' ability to draw young men of intellect to him certainly must
have been a major inspiration for Isocrates to open his own school, and, as he grew older,
he seemed to model himself more and more after Socrates. His *Antidosis* in particular is
a clear mimesis of Plato's *Apology of Socrates* (which, interestingly enough, may itself
have been an imitation of Gorgias' *Defense of Palamedes*).[31] The praise of Isocrates by
Socrates in Plato's dialogue the *Phaedrus* therefore may be semi-historically accurate. It
seems certain that Socrates and Isocrates at least knew of each other. However, Socrates'
generous remark that he suspects that studies in rhetoric "will not satisfy [Isocrates], but a
more divine impulse will lead him to greater things; for [. . .] something of philosophy is
inborn in his mind" (279B) must also be understood as a criticism of Isocrates by
Socrates' more faithful disciple Plato, because it suggests that Isocrates never became a
"true philosopher," but was instead someone who fell short of his potential.[32] Perhaps it
is these same fears of being dismissed as lacking in intellectual vigor that keeps many
contemporary academics from engaging in what might be regarded as "facile" or
"popular" discursive performances.

Plato: Rival Philosopher and Schoolmaster

Unlike Socrates and the older Sophists, Plato was a direct contemporary and rival
of Isocrates. According to George Kennedy, "the success of Isocrates' school probably

prompted Plato to open the Academy" (*Art* 182), which he did in 387 BCE, about five years after Isocrates opened his school.[33] Like Isocrates' school, Plato's Academy also was purported to be a permanent institution of higher education in "philosophy," but the two schoolmasters (each of whom called the other a "sophist" and himself a "philosopher") differed significantly in their definitions of "philosophy."[34] What Isocrates called "philosophy" meant learning how to deliberate and make decisions in the affairs of everyday life and in the public sphere as an active citizen, and, therefore, he believed that the study of philosophy should consist primarily of learning how to speak and write effectively.[35] Plato, on the other hand, described what Isocrates taught as "rhetoric," a mere "semblance" of philosophy, which he defined in the manner of Socrates as discovering "the Truth" through engaging in dialectic. In fact, the written historical record even suggests that "Plato may have coined the term *rhētorikē* to portray and define [and denigrate] the teachings of his rival Isocrates" (Schiappa, *Beginnings* 15). Not surprisingly, therefore, unlike Isocrates' school, Plato's Academy was not a school one attended if one wished to learn to become a public orator. Instead, Plato's curriculum focused on a rigorous regime of arithmetic, logic, and dialectic—his version of "philosophy." In other words, Plato offered a theoretical and contemplative form of education rather than instruction in a broad range of liberal studies that were meant to be put to use in everyday practice in the community. Our current emphasis in American higher education on disciplinary divisions, the acquisition and memorization of "content" and "facts," and engagement in "theoretical" debates and "research" projects conforms more closely to the Platonic ideal of a contemplative education rather than the Isocratean model of not just acquiring information, but transforming it into discursive performances that analyze and use that information to make judgments and prompt actions in the public sphere. This is a false binary, of course. In fact, a typical "research-oriented" classroom could easily incorporate some Isocratean projects and could cultivate an Isocratean civic-mindedness without forgoing its more theoretical emphasis.

Isocrates' program, as explained earlier, was a broad course of study that consisted of gaining familiarity with historical, political, and literary topics as well as practical training in discursive performances and the cultivation of morals. Beyond simply teaching students about historical events, political policies, and a corpus of literary texts, Isocrates insisted that his brand of philosophy made a difference in the world beyond the walls of the schoolhouse, and he claimed it did so by providing his students with strategies for making choices and reaching decisions in an uncertain and ever-changing world. As we saw in the previous chapter, the moral instruction given by Isocrates was based both on poetry and the more practical written discourses of past and present politicians and historians.[36] In comparison, rather than focusing on subjects such as poetry, politics, and history that were based upon a potentially corrupting, seductive, and dangerous language, Plato's students spent most of their time studying the presumably safer and more controllable subjects of mathematics, science, and logic, which were based largely on numbers rather than words. That is to say, in his curriculum, Plato tried as hard as possible to avoid the dangers of *logos* and the seduction of eloquence. As Aristotle remarked, it is unnecessary to use artistic language to teach geometry (*On Rhetoric* III.1404a). This prejudice toward the "reliability" of numbers is still prevalent in our present society. How many times, for example, have we heard our students or our fellow citizens tell us "the numbers don't lie"? However, because Isocrates encouraged his students to incorporate all types of appeals to their audiences— the emotional appeals favored by Gorgias, the logical appeals favored by Plato and Aristotle, and appeals based on the performer's actions and his character—he offers us a way to supplement the predominant and often uncritical use of logical appeals by our own students, as well as a way to temper their often unreflective use of personal experiences.

For Plato, however, philosophy was meant to be speculative and contemplative. He was eager to separate eloquence from the pursuit of knowledge because he felt that

eloquent prose speech, like poetry, had the effect of "crippling the mind." He saw public oratory as "a kind of disease, for which one has to acquire an antidote. The antidote must consist of knowledge 'of what things really are'" (Havelock, *Preface* 4). According to Plato, unlike the "true philosophers," his rivals, the "rhetoricians," felt "there [was] no need to know the truth of the actual matters, but one merely need[ed] to have discovered some device of persuasion which [would] make one appear to those who [did] not know to know better than those who know" (*Gorgias* 459C). As was his master Socrates, Plato was gravely concerned that the rhetoricians were capable of persuading "the ignorant" multitude (*Gorgias* 459A) to accept false propositions.

When taught properly, Isocrates felt that "rhetoric" should not be seen "as the study of techniques for creating effects upon ignorant hearers" (as Plato defined it) because the true value of public deliberation was to be found "in the actions of both speakers and listeners as deliberating agents" (T. Poulakos ix). In other words, a speaker's audience should be acknowledged as having political and moral agency as well, and a speaker or writer should always spend part of her time acting as a listener.[37] That is why an education in oratory, like the one Isocrates taught, was meant to enable students to gain greater facility in both speaking *and* listening. Isocrates saw much value in closing one's mouth and opening one's ears. As he told Demonicus, "Let there be but two occasions for speech—when the subject is one which you thoroughly know and when it is one on which you are compelled to speak. On these occasions alone is speech better than silence; on all others it is better to be silent than to speak" (*To Demonicus* 41). Therefore, in Isocrates' school, one not only learned how to *give* counsel but also how to be receptive to *receiving* counsel, so that one would be less likely to succumb to the flattery of those who praised him and would learn to think beyond immediate and personal gratification. "If you really [desire] to find out what is advantageous to the state," Isocrates admonished, "you ought to give your attention more to those who oppose your views than to those who seek to gratify you, knowing well that of the orators who

come before you, those who say what you desire are able to delude you easily" (*On the Peace* 10).

To put this in modern-day terms, as Astin remarks, one of the primary goals of higher education ought to be

> to produce educated citizens who understand and appreciate not only how democracy is supposed to work, but also their own responsibility to become active and informed participants in it, citizens who demand much more from their representatives and who have low tolerance for those politicians who would undermine democracy by disseminating false information, and citizens who are capable of defending themselves against the manipulative practices of politicians and the disinformation promulgated by the mass media. (44)

Certainly, such terms as "critical thinking" and "critical consumption" have been buzz words in American higher education for at least the past decade or so, but Isocrates was not content to stop with criticism as many instructors seem to be today. Instead, Isocrates regarded criticism as only the beginning of public *action*, and it is his focus on the active engagement in politics and on the process of collective decision-making that follows the critical consumption of others' discursive performances that we ought to reincorporate more thoroughly in our classroom practices today. That is, we need to engage our students not only in the somewhat restricted decision-making process of writing for a single audience (the teacher) but we also need to engage them in the more difficult and contentious public decision-making process whereby they receive more diverse feedback and are better able to see the results (or lack thereof) of their discursive performances beyond the assignment of a grade.

Plato, however, did not agree that public decision-making constituted a valid standard of judgment, since he believed that Justice was an absolute ideal rather than a relative opinion, no matter how many people might happen to concur with that opinion.

Unlike Isocrates, Plato was interested in "the permanence of the abstract whether as formula or as concept, as opposed to the fluctuating, here-today-gone-tomorrow character of the concrete situation" (Havelock, *Preface* 227). Plato rejected what he perceived to be the bewitching monologue of public address and embraced instead the intimate back-and-forth repartee of one-to-one dialectic (and this is the model our current student writing assignments more closely resemble—a dialectic between the student and her teacher, with the teacher often playing the role of the wise Socrates who pretends not to know what answer is "correct," even though both interlocutors know that he probably knows much more about the subject than the student does). Plato stubbornly refused to view the deliberations in the Assembly or the courts as large scale dialectical question-and-answer sessions in which various opposing parties were seeking to arrive at the most just course of action. In contrast to dialectic, in which the supposedly open-minded participants followed "a method of division of the question and definition of the factors involved, testing hypotheses as they [were] advanced," Plato felt that rhetoric involved "a preselected arbitrary conclusion: that a defendant [was] guilty or that the assembly should follow a particular policy or that a certain proposal [was] feasible" (G. Kennedy, *Classical* 58-59). In addition, Plato claimed that rhetoricians such as Isocrates taught their students to choose "those arguments that prove[d] or seem[ed] to prove the conclusion, whether or not it [was] true" (G. Kennedy, *Classical* 59). The Platonic Socrates, by contrast, always seemed to be able to prove that his conclusion was, in fact, "true."

Isocrates openly stated that he was "accustomed to tell the students in [his] school of philosophy that the first question to be considered [was]—what is the object to be accomplished by the discourse as a whole and by its parts?" Once the students had "discovered [the object to be accomplished] and the matter [had] been accurately determined," he then instructed them that they should "seek the rhetorical elements whereby that which [they had] set out to do [could] be elaborated and fulfilled" (*To the*

Children of Jason 8). While these methods may sound remarkably like Plato's accusations about foregone conclusions, as well as our own advice to our students that they should begin their arguments by first crafting a thesis statement about what it is they are hoping to prove, Isocrates would have bristled at the suggestion that he was teaching his students to seek success by winning the audience over to their viewpoints without taking into consideration the question of morality or justice. In answer to Plato's moral objections, he would have explained that "the technique of a speech is neither morally good or bad; only individuals are good and bad," and that in his school he "would start with a young man who [was] good [and develop] that potential by the contemplation of great models" (G. Kennedy, *Classical* 41).[38] Isocrates would then have gone on to explain to Plato that the reason he had his students continue the sophistic practice of composing discourses on either side of a dispute was not to "make the weaker case the stronger" but to develop their skills in research, invention, style, and arrangement as writers and also to hone their abilities as listeners to weigh both sides of a question, each of which might be eloquently presented and each of which might be presented by speakers acting in good faith, rather than assuming they already knew the best course of action to take in any given situation, much as we may now ask our students to create "pro/con" lists during the invention phase of some of their assignments and to acknowledge and address the opposing arguments.

Although, as a fellow admirer of Socrates, Isocrates shared Plato's concerns about the possibility of an immoral but charismatic and talented orator leading an uninformed or gullible audience to agree to a harmful or ill-informed decision, he was not willing to dismiss the validity and morality of public address altogether. In fact, he saw the private deliberation of dialectic as less valuable than public deliberations. He believed strongly that the value of rhetoric, in spite of its potential for abuse, was its ability to engage many people with diverse viewpoints in a deliberation in order to enable the most beneficial choice to prevail whenever possible. He knew that Plato was correct when he claimed

that persuasive speech could never lead to an *absolute* best choice, but he felt that *logos* would lead the debaters to a *kairotic* best choice in a given situation, and that was the most that fallible humans could hope to achieve. "For since it is not in the nature of men to attain a science by the possession of which we can know positively what we should do or what we should say," he proclaimed, "in the next resort I hold that man to be wise who is able by his powers of conjecture to arrive generally at the best course" (*Antidosis* 271). We too can hope to help our students learn not to be timid about making *kairotic* "best" judgments in a world of ever-changing circumstances, and to learn to act, not at random, but through thoughtful conjecture and the careful weighing of possible choices by acting as a speaker *and* a listener in the public exchange of diverse viewpoints, but, most importantly, *to act* for the purpose of the social good as a public citizens rather than to defer making a decision continually, to be reluctant to voice an opinion publicly, or to rely on "experts" to make all supposedly "non-privatized" decisions for them.

Isocrates clearly had much more faith in the positive potential of *logos* than Plato, and he felt that the most just decision typically would prevail as long as each orator himself was morally accountable for the outcomes of his discursive performances. Therefore, as we have seen, his course was "both a study of how to make choices and a study of how choices form character and make good citizens" (Neel, *Plato* 211). He did not deny that speech could be used for injustice. Instead, he cautioned his students that "no rhetoric can be better than the character of its orator, and sometimes it seduces him," so "the good orator, good both in a moral and an artistic sense, must be aware of his power and must never forget his responsibility" (G. Kennedy, *Art* 24). In fact, his awareness of the obligation and responsibility one must accept when wielding the power of *logos* is one reason that Isocrates emphasized the importance of an "honest" character so heavily. He understood that ethics "is the practical art of determining the should, the action we should take. How we should act with one another is the central focus of ethics, and how that interaction with one another is established through acts of discourse

delineates the province of rhetorical ethics" (Porter xiv). Isocrates hoped that by allowing his students to attempt to determine the most just actions in the public sphere and to see the consequences of their acts of discursive power that he could train them to develop an *ethos* that would allow them to play these language games of power "with a minimum of domination" (Foucault, *Final* 18).

My point here is that unlike many contemporary writing instructors, Isocrates gave his students ample opportunities to take their discursive performances into the broader public sphere and to feel the full weight of responsibility for the actions that did or did not result based on the distribution and consumption of their discourses. It is time, I am arguing, that we should consider doing the same. Our students need to be given more opportunities to see that actions beyond the assignment of an academic grade result from discourse that is distributed publicly—actions that affect not only the rhetor but also her friends, her family, and the community at large. They also need to be given the chance to listen to more voices criticizing or praising their discursive performances and to feel the disappointment of *not* being heard or published. Hopefully, however, they will at least experience the ways in which actions *do* follow from words, to see how their words *can* make a difference in society, and they will therefore develop the habit of getting involved in communal decision-making processes rather than retreating into a skeptical attitude of "each person for him- or herself" or "look out for number one." The fact that many of Isocrates' students were recognized and acclaimed for their contributions to the public welfare and the maintenance of a free society[39] suggests that his program was quite successful at overturning such selfish individualistic attitudes.

In fact, the huge success of Isocrates' school may have forced Plato to take a position on the value and nature of what he saw as the two major competing forms of education—the Socratic and the sophistic. The main dialogue associated with Plato's attack on (and perhaps invention of)[40] "rhetoric" is the *Gorgias*. In the *Gorgias*, the title character claims to be skilled in the "art of rhetoric" (449A) which he initially defines

simply as "skill in speech" (449D). Eventually, at the insistence of Socrates, he elaborates on his definition of rhetoric as follows: "I call it the ability to persuade with speeches either judges in the law courts or statesmen in the council-chamber or the commons in the Assembly or an audience at any other meeting that may be held on public affairs" (452E). Persuasion (as opposed to truth), he concedes, is "the main substance of the art" of rhetoric (453A). Therefore, according to the "logical" path down which Socrates leads him, it follows that rhetoric must be a "producer of persuasion for belief, not for instruction in the matter of right and wrong" (455A).

Through this exchange between Gorgias and Socrates, Plato attempted to prove to potential students and the larger public that his rivals (particularly Isocrates, who may have been Gorgias' most well-known student) were only interested in teaching their students techniques for achieving success rather than for arriving at "the Truth." He tried to convince his audience that rhetoric was therefore dangerous because rhetoricians had a direct influence on political and legal life even though their business was "not to instruct a law court or a public meeting in matter of right and wrong, but only to make them believe" (455A). "There is a false and true belief," he counseled the Athenians, "but not a false and true knowledge, so knowledge and belief are not the same" (454D). Those interested in achieving the Good and the Just, therefore, would seek out an education in philosophy, not rhetoric, and the masses would allow the true philosophers to make all the decisions of consequence rather than letting themselves be swept away by a rhetorician's eloquence. The ultimate aim of his educational system, in other words, was "the production of an élite, philosophical, governing class" (Beck 213). Too often today, this is exactly how our society is governed, by a small number of people making the decisions for everyone. We live in a time, that is, when there is "widespread concern about the state of American democracy as voter registration continues to decline and voter apathy and cynicism about political life increase among youth" (Hollander v) and when "the laws of the market supercede the laws of government, and the freedom [to

participate in democratic governance] is literally cashed in for the freedom of each individual member—to consume, to make profit, or struggle to survive—alone" (Giroux 79). In such a time, we need more than ever to follow an Isocratean democratic educational model in which students are provided "with the tools for rigorous analysis, critical reflection, and participation in the democracy" (Hollander v), rather than a Platonic elitist model in which a select few effectively make the decisions for us all.

By the end of the *Gorgias*, Socrates somewhat reluctantly concludes that rhetoric might have some value if it is used to "[point] to what is just" (527C). In other words, rhetoric might become acceptable, not by pretending to assist people to discover what is just at the moment, but only as a way of disseminating to the masses the Truth about justice which would be arrived at by philosophers engaged in dialectic. Rhetoric's objective, in this case, would not be to persuade audiences about the justice of one side or another, but simply to inform the audience of the Truth. This type of rhetoric conformed exactly to Plato's depiction of public oratory as a monologue addressed to a non-participatory audience, which is how we often present completed discourses to our students today, that is, we treat the texts students are asked to read in the classroom or uncover in their research as either aesthetic triumphs or as straightforward data. I agree with Susan Miller that we need to stop answering the call that hails us "to persuade students of their insufficiency as against 'important,' if not necessarily canonical, writers" ("Composition" 1), writers who are discussed as if they are Platonic intellectuals who are dispensing the Truth to the masses. An Isocratean approach to critical reading would help our students see that the presentation of discourse rarely consists of pure pleasure or "just the facts," and would give just as much importance to students' writing as to the already completed discourses of the "important" or "authoritative" writers they are reading.

Isocrates remained committed to Protagoras' two *logoi* theory and regarded Plato's final definition of acceptable rhetoric in the *Gorgias* as reductive. He argued that

audiences could not "wisely pass judgment on the past or take counsel for the future, unless they examine[d] and compare[d] the arguments of opposing speakers, themselves giving an unbiased hearing to both sides" (*On the Peace* 11). Like Protagoras and Gorgias before him, Isocrates believed that rhetoric should enable one to determine a good choice from an array of viable options and then act upon it. Isocrates realized what many contemporary teachers since the "rhetorical turn" in the academy have come to accept, that is, that without the persuasive power of *logos* people would be unable to make any decisions or choices in their lives, regardless of the type of government they lived under, because they have to use *logos* both to deliberate in their own minds as well as in public.[41]

Several years later, in his dialogue the *Phaedrus*, Plato modified the position he espoused in the *Gorgias* and allowed persuasion to reenter the realm of "good" rhetoric by remarking that "it is the function of speech to lead souls by persuasion" (271C). Even though he conceded that the purpose of rhetoric was to persuade, he now required the "good" rhetorician to be a philosopher who first arrives at the truth before he begins to speak.[42] In the dialogue, Socrates summarizes Plato's strict requirements for "good" rhetoric:

> A man must know the truth about all the particular things of which he speaks or writes, and must be able to define everything separately; then when he has defined them, he must know how to divide them by classes until further division is impossible; and in the same way he must understand the nature of the soul, must find out the class of speech adapted to each nature, and must arrange and adorn his discourse accordingly [. . .] Until he has attained to all this, he will not be able to speak by the method of art, either for purposes of instruction or of persuasion. (277B-C)

This description of an ideal rhetoric was Plato's "attempt to create a formal, logical system of argumentation from universally affirmed and binding first principles or

essences, causes and substances" (Enos, *Greek Rhetoric* 83). In this way, Plato not only

could deny Isocrates the title of "philosopher" but could also degrade his status as a

rhetorician as well. Plato left the further categorization and systematization of his ideal

rhetoric to his pupil Aristotle, whom he allowed to teach a public course in rhetoric on

the grounds of the Academy in the afternoons (making Aristotle perhaps the first

Graduate Teaching Assistant in the history of Western higher education) and who would

eventually write perhaps the most comprehensive and influential classical treatise on

rhetoric.[43]

To Isocrates, however, Plato's proposed system of scientific rhetoric was no

better than the "hard and fast rules" of the fifth-century handbook tradition. In addition,

Plato's "good" rhetoric was still not a rhetoric of mass, public exchanges, since only in an

intimate one-to-one conversation could a speaker reasonably be expected to assess the

nature of his listener's soul and adjust his discourse accordingly. This does not mean that

Isocrates did not think that a rhetor could not make a "best guess" about the reaction of

his audience, but he would have to be willing to admit that he could never really *know*

what it would be. Finally, unlike Isocrates' vision in which "social standards emerged

out of the needs and requirements of individuals living together" and *logos* was shared by

all, in Plato's vision of rhetoric "social standards were derived from a source external to

the *polis* and imposed upon it through the ministrations of a select few" (Perkins 64).

Not surprisingly perhaps, "Plato led his pupils towards intellectual research and a

life of retirement; the tendency of the school was markedly aristocratic, and several of the

lads became tyrants in later life" (Freeman 180). While Isocrates undeniably had

markedly aristocratic leanings too, and he occasionally expressed a similar view to

Plato's that the populace should be led by a select and knowledgeable few, he also placed

more emphasis on all rulers seeking counsel from and being held in check by the ruled,

and stressed that both ruler and ruled had obligations toward the other. We need to use

our classes as a way of reminding our students of their obligations as both leaders and the

led and of habituating them to fulfilling these obligations by participating in public decision-making processes, by listening to others' counsel, and by offering their own counsel to others. Although he himself led a life of relative seclusion due to his personal limitations in voice and confidence, Isocrates not only wrote and distributed political tracts meant to influence public opinions and world leaders, but he also insisted that his students go out into the *polis* to get "actual practice under actual speaking conditions" while "still under the wing of [their] master" (Wagner 329), and he encouraged them to use their education "to write discourses, not for private disputes, but which [dealt] with the world of Hellas, with affairs of state, and [were] appropriate to be delivered at the Pan-Hellenic assemblies" (*Antidosis* 46). These are the kinds of discourses we should be encouraging our students to produce rather than personal explorations of their "true" selves or, at least in the initial semesters of their advanced schooling, "professional" or "academic" discourses. If nothing else, we should certainly be requiring them to produce discourses to be distributed beyond the teacher's desk or the walls of the classroom, so that they can have the chance to observe and to be accountable for the public reactions (or lack of reactions) to their discursive performances.

Isocrates tried to prove the benefit of his curriculum of public oratory over that of Plato's private contemplation by giving proof from example. He stated that the Greeks would find that among the "public men who are living today or who have but lately passed away those who give most study to the art of words are the best of the statesmen who come before you on the rostrum, and, furthermore, that among the ancients it was the greatest and the most illustrious orators who brought to the city most of her blessings" (*Antidosis* 231). In comparison to Plato's Academy, Isocrates' school did indeed seem to tend less toward the production of tyrants, and several of his students became some of the leading democratic statesmen of the day (e.g., Timotheous, Isaeus, Hypereides)[44], issuing forth, as Cicero would later marvel, "as if from the Trojan Horse" (*De Oratore* II.94). If R. Johnson is correct in his assessment that "Isocrates had about a hundred pupils in his

lifetime" ("Note" 299), one cannot help but marvel that "forty-one illustrious pupils are mentioned [by Cicero] as foremost among the accomplished writers and debaters of the intellectual ages" (Wagner 324). While none of us may expect to achieve such a large proportion of "illustrious" pupils, we can certainly strive to make our students more active citizens whose counsel and participation in public affairs prevents acts of tyranny and promotes democratic governance and the arts.

It should be clear by now that Plato was more interested in how his students might use rhetoric to improve people's souls than in how they might use it to become involved actively in the affairs of state. Isocrates, on the other hand, was "less imaginative speculator" and "more of a down-to-earth practitioner" (Nash et al 6) than Plato. Even in the face of Plato's virulent attacks, Isocrates maintained his position that *philosophia* should be the study of how to address practical problems where only probable, not certain knowledge was available. As one of his later admirers would say, "Anyone who is interested in true philosophy, and enjoys studying its practical as well as its speculative branches, and is seeking a career by which he will benefit many people, not one which will give him a carefree life, would be well advised to follow the principles which [Isocrates] adopts" (Dionysius 115). I am arguing that these ought to be the interests of most contemporary writing teachers, too, and that Isocrates therefore provides an excellent model for us to emulate. If nothing else, Isocrates certainly did a service to the state "by bringing high aims and large sympathies into the preparation for active life, and by making good citizens of many who perhaps would not have aspired to become [Platonic] philosophers" (Jebb 35). We can certainly hope to do the same and not be diminished for it. In fact, it makes sense that in our capacity as pedagogues, we should turn to Isocrates for our example because while Plato may have won the debate over the definition of "philosophy," Isocrates won the battle over the structure of higher education since, "on the whole it was Isocrates, not Plato, who educated fourth-century Greece and subsequently the Hellenistic and Roman worlds" (Marrou 79).[45] Indeed, his example

continued to be a strong presence in higher education throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and even in the early American colleges and universities, as we saw in Chapter 1. What I am suggesting is that it is now a *kairotic* moment to recover Isocratean pedagogy from the diminished status it has experienced since the rise of Platonic Idealism, scientific positivism, and professionalism in the American academy.

Isocrates' (Often Overlooked) Influence on Later Educators

As we have seen, Isocrates lived a long life and taught almost continuously for nearly fifty years. His educational program was highly imitated and, more than any other educator of his time, Isocrates shaped the configuration of the institutions of higher education that sprung up after his—first in Greece and later throughout the Roman Empire and all of Europe. Furthermore, "his own political writings, read throughout Greece, gave him greater influence upon popular opinion than belonged to any other literary man of the time" (Jebb 13).[46] Isocrates deserves a great deal more credit than he usually receives for making rhetoric the principal subject in the Greek and Roman systems of higher education and those systems that followed for centuries afterward in the Western world. According to Russell Wagner, Isocrates had "perhaps the most successful school of rhetoric ever known" and, consequently, "perhaps no one of the great rhetoricians of the past has exerted so great an influence upon the succeeding ages of oratory" (323).

Unfortunately, Isocrates' influence is often currently reduced to his contributions to style (such as the periodic sentence), and he frequently is not given enough credit for his innovations as the founder of the first permanent school of advanced learning, as the designer of a broad course in liberal education, or as the first comprehensive writing instructor. As Harry Hubbell observes, "so striking were the contributions of Isocrates to the purely formal side of writing that criticism has busied itself with this, and his success as a perfecter of style has obscured the fact that he continued the encyclopedic education

of the sophists" (xi). Perhaps one reason Isocrates has been overlooked as a teacher of all

aspects of *logos* is due to the fact that, unlike his most famous successors Aristotle,

Cicero, and Quintilian, he never wrote a comprehensive treatise on rhetoric or described

his educational system in detail.[47] Even so, he clearly provided the template from which

these three, respected classical figures developed their own theories of rhetorical

education.

For example, most evidence suggests that Aristotle's lectures on rhetoric were

prompted by the popularity and success of Isocrates' school. According to Cicero, when

Aristotle "saw Isocrates prospering on account of the renown of his pupils [he] suddenly

almost totally changed the form of teaching in his school [. . .] linking knowledge with

practice in speaking" (*De Oratore* III.141).[48] Aristotle eventually broke away from

Plato's theory of an absolute reality separate from earthly experience and instead came to

agree with Isocrates that rhetoric could provide a common sense approach to situations in

which only contingent knowledge was available.[49] He may have even adapted his

famous definition of rhetoric as discovering "the available means of persuasion in each

case" (*Rhetoric* 1355a) from Isocrates' contention that formal training in *logos* makes one

"more skillful and more resourceful in discovering the possibilities of a subject" (*Against*

15). In addition, he laid out his rhetorical treatise according to Isocrates' instructional

triad of invention, arrangement, and style.[50] However, Aristotle continued to distinguish

rhetoric, "which deals with particular people, occasions, and facts," from dialectic,

"which deals with universals" (G. Kennedy, *Classical* 82), and he also continued to place

dialectic and logic above rhetoric and eloquence in importance. Consequently, he taught

rhetoric as a supplementary, rather than a primary subject. In our current environment of

attempting to achieve disciplinary status and professional recognition for rhetoric (or

rhetoric and composition) within the American academy (and especially within

departments of English), it seems to me that Isocrates provides us with a better champion

to rally around than Aristotle, who has gained great popularity among academic rhetoricians and writing instructors in recent decades.

In addition, unlike Isocrates, who had an almost postmodern-ish, antifoundational approach to discourse instruction, Aristotle attempted to counter "the non-rational, indirect methods of the sophistic with a rational system for the production of reasonable discourse" (Enos, *Greek Rhetoric* 58) by producing a definitive *technē* on rhetoric. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defined three types of speeches separately, divided them by classes, defined the natures of various audiences and suggested the class of speech best adapted to each, and finally spent some time discussing how to arrange and adorn each discourse accordingly. In doing so, he seemed to be rising to the bait of Plato's implicit challenge in the *Phaedrus* (277) to supply a method to the art of rhetoric by reducing it to rules— something which Isocrates refused to do and which many of us balk against today in our rejection of the restrictive technicalities of current-traditional rhetoric. Aristotle did, however, maintain Isocrates' focus on the usefulness of rhetoric for reaching decisions in the practical realm of public affairs, and he concurred with his portrayal of rhetoric as a neutral art whose use for good or ill depends upon the character of the speaker. The Romans, especially Cicero and Quintilian would adapt this essentially Isocratean view even further, eventually claiming that the only true orator was the *vir bonus*, "the good man speaking well."

Cicero claimed that the three books of his *De Oratore* were "radically different from the standard rules, embracing the whole theory of oratory of the ancients, both Aristotelean and Isocratean" (*Letters to Friends* 1.9.23). Hubbell, however, argues that Cicero's "whole attitude toward oratory as an art is drawn from Isocrates" (17), even though Cicero claims to have seen himself principally as a student of Aristotle, who he felt was unsurpassed "in learning [and] in acumen, in originality of thought [and] in subtlety of dialect" (*Orator* 172). Even so, Cicero himself states that he looked to Isocrates to find guidance that went beyond Aristotle's "dull routine of technicalities" and

that took into consideration "not only rules but broad general knowledge, natural fitness, and practice" (G. Kennedy, *Art* 325), as well as creative talents and abilities. I think that it is time that we turn to Isocrates for similar guidance. It is also time for us to recognize, as did Corbett late in his study of classical rhetoric, that

> Aristotle is not responsible for the liberal-education aspects of rhetoric. It's Cicero and Quintilian. What you realize when you study them more is that their progenitor is Isocrates. It's obvious that at the time, to his contemporaries, Isocrates was much more popular and successful in rhetoric than Aristotle. Isocrates is the great proponent and the great promoter of liberal education and the study of rhetoric as a liberal discipline. (qtd. in Connors, *Selected Essays* 267)

Like Isocrates, Cicero "wanted rhetoric to be a system of general culture" (Ochs 106), rather than an art reduced to only three occasions for oratory: judicial oratory (the law courts), deliberative oratory (the Assembly), and epideictic oratory (speeches of praise or blame). In today's complex world, we too need to break the available modes of discourse out of Aristotle's convenient, but restrictive, tripartite classification system.

Cicero also followed Isocrates' lead by placing instruction in *logos* at the pinnacle of intellectual activity and by insisting that wisdom and eloquence are interdependent and can do little good by themselves alone. Our students also need to realize that all the "factual" knowledge in the world is practically useless unless it is distributed and put into action through public discursive performances. As Isocrates made clear to his students, "ideas are of value only as they can be translated into action" (Norlin 1:xvii-xviii). Finally, Cicero shares with Isocrates the belief that speaking on great and noble themes can improve an orator's character; that is, he believed that "the orator in his search for material will acquire the habits of thought which will make him superior to his fellows in action as well as in speech" (Hubbell 37). We clearly retain some of this belief, as evidenced by our continued insistence that all students take at least one semester to read

at least some part of "the best that has been thought and said" in our literary tradition and our continued efforts to expose them to various "multicultural," "feminist," and other heretofore excluded positions. While these are laudatory impulses and may be viewed as an expanded repertoire of "great and noble" themes, I would argue that we should stop teaching such courses in the limited modes of literary appreciation and cultural critique and should incorporate instead a more Isocratean rhetorical approach to discourse analysis and production in order to translate the insights reached through reading and discussing these materials into civic-minded *action* in the public sphere. In other words, we need to recognize reading as just as much of a *generative* activity as a contemplative activity, and just as much of a *political and ethical* activity as a pleasurable activity.

Cicero's attempt to emulate Isocrates' educational system by placing the study and production of *logos* at the center of a training aimed to produce a publicly active citizen-orator was in turn imitated and developed by Quintilian, although Quintilian, like Cicero, seems to downplay his indebtedness to Isocrates. The Isocratean tradition "also molded most of the Church Fathers who, besides being prominent theologians and believers, were also eminent orators or preachers. They realized that faith is a matter of being convinced and therefore it must be proclaimed by convincing and persuasive speech" (Ijsseling 16).[51] Beyond providing the model for education in persuasive speech, Isocrates' broad instruction in politics, government, ethics, literary criticism, and history also supplied the rationale for the normative curriculum of the seven liberal arts developed by the Romans and used for centuries throughout European institutions of higher education (Kimball 31).[52] Based on this evidence, I think it is clear that Isocrates' school, and not Plato's Academy, should be recognized as the earliest model of the modern Western university. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that even in twenty-first century America, "the shadow of Isocrates is very much with us" (G. Kennedy, "Shadow" 19). However, as I described in Chapter 1, the influence of Isocrates has waned greatly since the end of the nineteenth century in American colleges and

universities. In the next chapter, I will describe in detail how an Isocratean curriculum might be renewed and incorporated into the ubiquitous first-year writing course, and I will argue further than we should consider reinstituting a four-year requirement in rhetoric and civic discourse for all undergraduates.

Chapter 4

An Applied Isocratean Curriculum

> Perhaps no one of the great rhetoricians of the past has exerted so great an influence upon the succeeding ages of oratory; and perhaps none has been so much underestimated. In the revival of classical rhetoric we shall do well to consider the importance of Isocrates upon the whole field.
> —Russell H. Wagner, "The Rhetorical Theory of Isocrates"

> A knowledge of the rhetorical past can help us solve the problems of writing in modern America.
> —James Murphy, *The Rhetorical Tradition*

> Perhaps the writers we help to train today will become more engaged, powerful agents of change and persuasion in the public domain. If they can see themselves linked in history to a tradition of rhetoric and persuasive oratory, as designers of texts rather than passive victims of rules, they may indeed help us change our own discourse into something more vibrant and engaging.
> —Catherine Davidson, "Teaching Writing Theory"

In this final chapter, I will begin by exploring our present social and political climate in America and in higher education. Next, I will outline the goals of a twenty-first century Isocratean classroom and offer some suggestions for how such goals might be achieved in first-year writing courses in American institutions of higher education. I will go on to suggest, however, that the current conception of composition as a required one-semester or, at best, two-semester course in "first-year writing" is finally inadequate for a fully realized (re)new(ed) civic rhetoric. In order to reintroduce the full scope of Isocrates' discourse training into our twenty-first century American colleges and universities, I will contend, we will have to implement a four-year, progressive program in rhetoric and civic discourse in which each student enrolls in at least one rhetoric and civic discourse class per year.[1] Such a program, I will go on to argue, would be more successfully administered as a department separate from the English Department—the most

predominant current home of written composition courses and a place where, as I mentioned earlier, literary texts and aesthetic principles are generally valued more highly than practical texts and rhetorical principles. The goals, descriptions of assignments, and heuristic strategies that I will be recommending are meant to be, to borrow a phrase from Berlin, "illustrative rather than prescriptive," and, like Berlin, it is my hope that teachers and administrators will "find in them suggestions for developing course materials and activities appropriate to their own situations" (*Rhetorics, Poetics* 115). After all, as Isocrates knew so well, success can never be predicted with certainty, and so each instructor and institution must be prepared to seize the opportunities presented by his or her own unique local teaching situations.

Where We Are: A Disconnected Public

According to education professor Carl Glickman, contemporary American society is experiencing a "huge disconnect between education, public purpose, citizenship, and democracy" (7). Today, the average adult American "does not attend a single public, civic or community meeting a year," which has resulted in a "decline in citizen engagement in community, neighborhood or government affairs [of] more than 40 percent since the 1950s" (Glickman 7). As Isocrates undoubtedly would have done, Glickman places the responsibility for this decline in civic participation squarely on the shoulders of educators. "America is on the cusp of a failed experiment," he says, "not a failure for corporations, individuals, or national wealth and not a failure of military or world power, but a failure to improve education of all citizens so that 'we the people' means just that, all of us" (7). In addition, unlike the active public discourse that was vital to the highly participatory democracy of ancient Athens, "the 'bottom line' of politics [in America] these days is the instantaneous public opinion poll which measures popular *reaction* to current conditions rather than the *considered, deliberate judgment* of 'We, the People'" (McGee 75).[2] In a political and social climate where individuals do

not think that decisions of consequence are theirs to make and/or that "public debate is nothing but a cacophony of pointless disagreement" in which "[e]verybody's got a view; what's right for me isn't right for you" (J. Smith 208), and in an environment where citizen subjects are not educated in ways that overtly and deliberately help them engage in and negotiate public issues, "public discussion, largely experienced through the media, strikes them as distant and opaque; therefore it fails to involve them or *make* them want to understand the issues; therefore they don't make demands on the educational system to lay the groundwork for that understanding" (J. Smith 218). It is up to us to begin making those demands on the educational system so that our students *will* be motivated to understand and contribute to public deliberations and *will* demand that American colleges and universities train future generations of citizen subjects to understand and contribute to public debates as well.

As we have seen, Isocrates expected his students to "pursue and practice" those studies which would enable them "to govern wisely" both their own households and the commonwealth (*Antidosis* 285). In other words, Isocrates taught rhetoric "for both public and private use—i.e., for those who sought to become politicians as well as for those who merely wanted to educate themselves and presumably to develop their capacity to assess the arguments made by politicians" (T. Poulakos 68). His pedagogy therefore included "a thoroughly aroused and intense patriotism of the highest type, which would be satisfied not with voting merely, but with acting, doing, talking, planning for the best interest of the state" (Wagner 331). Consequently, he provided an education committed not so much to personal advancement or private commercial interests, but most importantly to those matters that concerned all society such as advising leaders, promoting or opposing public actions (e.g., declarations of war or peace), establishing laws, and not just forming judgments and opinions but working to articulate them in writing that would have the chance to be read, considered, and acted upon by other members of the community. By contrast, the most political activity our students are

regularly encouraged to participate in by educators today is voting. However, according to Glickman, the unfortunate truth is that even "the simple act of voting in national elections is consistently an activity of less than the majority of Americans." He goes on to remind us that "voting is the most minimal form of citizenship, demanding nothing more than showing up and hopefully pulling a lever or connecting the lines" or, now, touching a screen (7).

No less than Isocrates' students, our students should not be satisfied with merely the most inactive type of political involvement (i.e., voting), but should be taught how to use their writing to generate and distribute their own arguments as well as to assess the barrage of political, corporate, personal, and social arguments that they are confronted with every day. As McComiskey points out:

> within the context of postmodern communal democracies, each
> participating citizen must possess two general skills that enable
> democratic activity. First, the ability to *critique* marginalizing
> representations, disadvantageous subject positions, and biased modes of
> legitimation; second, the ability to *compose* empowering representations,
> advantageous subject positions, and yet remain inside the scope of
> "legitimate" discursive practices within any given institution. Both
> critiquing and composing are crucial for a postmodern pedagogy.
> (*Teaching*116)

It is my contention that even more than Isocrates' pupils, citizens in today's postmodern democracies must not only be given the chance to acquire the abilities to approach cultural knowledge critically, but should also be given the opportunity to acquire the rhetorical skills by which they can produce and distribute their own influential public discourses. As McComiskey proclaims, "it is important for students to learn that their critical knowledge is significant only insofar as it is made public" (*Teaching* 132); that is, "if critical knowledge never enters the flow of public discourse, then it perishes in the

silence of its knower" (121). Trimbur also argues that "the circulation of writing should figure much more prominently in writing instruction" and that "delivery can no longer be thought of simply as a technical aspect of discourse. It must be seen also as ethical and political—a democratic aspiration to devise delivery systems that circulate ideas, information, and knowledge and thereby expand the public forums in which people can deliberate on the issues of the day" ("Composition" 190). As I have been arguing throughout this dissertation, our students need to be given more opportunities to actually "go public" with their writing and thereby explicitly attempt to make their own contributions and changes to what counts as cultural knowledge and to offer suggestions for what types of knowledge should be acted upon for the betterment not just of themselves and the members of their own households but also the larger local, national, and global communities.

Admittedly, like many of our students today, Isocrates' pupils must have been interested in using their education to obtain individual wealth, power, and self-satisfaction. According to classical historians, Isocrates lived in a time in which the privilege of the individual over the affairs of the state was beginning in earnest. As Jebb observes, "In the normal Greek conception Society and the State were one. The man had no existence apart from the citizen" (15). Brian Vickers agrees that "an involvement in politics was ranked highly in ancient society, since it was implied that the individual was escaping from self-centeredness and devoting his abilities to the *vita activa*, for the common good" (7). However, as the population expanded in the fourth century BCE along with the production and circulation of various kinds of ethical, political, and practical information, the opportunities that came along with these increases in population and forms of knowledge resulted in a situation in which "the limited elasticity of the state-life could no longer respond. The individual [began] to draw more and more away from the State. Instead of the citizen's duty being the standard [. . .] the needs of

individual development became the measure of what could reasonably be expected from the citizen" (Jebb 15).

Isocrates attempted to temper this trend toward privatization and selfish individualism by directly connecting his students' lessons to their immediate engagement in a participatory democracy. His instruction in rhetoric was thus meant to forge "a person capable of negotiating the disjuncture that lies between reason and emotion, the disparity that exists in one's self-interest as individual and as citizen, and the tension that informs one's self-understanding as a political and a socio-economic human being" (T. Poulakos 54). That is to say that "Isocratean rhetoric turned neither to the individual's capacity for and susceptibility to language (in the manner of the sophists) nor to political or legal philosophy (in the manner of Plato). Rather, it turned to communities of people living in the polis amidst a deluge of unwieldy rhetorical forces" (J. Poulakos, *Sophistical Rhetoric* 132). As we have seen, as distinct from the concerns of an Isocratean communal civic rhetoric, the standards of individual development and self-interest seem to prevail in American higher education today and in fact have been part of the American ideology of personal freedom and economic and social progress from our nation's inception.

I concur with McComiskey's position that "[s]tudents need to learn socio-rhetorical strategies that enlist all members of specific communities—even those who have, in their eyes, committed offenses—in a common goal to make the communities better as a whole. And it is only through the [Isocratean] turn toward pragmatic, public discourse that students can learn these socio-rhetorical strategies" ("Teaching" 133). Because a (re)new(ed) Isocratean pedagogy promotes not only "critical thinking" but also insists on the public distribution of the decisions arrived at through the process of composing discourses, it not only allows citizen subjects to identify and construct common concerns but also enables them to negotiate with interested and affected others and to challenge the status quo.[3] I am suggesting that the best way for students to learn

not only how to *examine* but also how to *transform* normative values and how to participate in the negotiation of a just society by using their discursive skills not to conquer, but to achieve parity between diverse peoples,[4] is to be given more opportunities to accept the responsibility of writing within out-of-the-classroom, "real world," public contexts.[5]

In an (re)new(ed) Isocratean classroom of the twenty-first century, our students may discover, as Isocrates himself did, "how an individual, above all a writer, can invoke and comply with a dominant cultural language, namely that of democracy, but at the same time also subvert and question it" (Too 234). This is why I hope with Paul Smith that "even within the determination of the human agent through and in different subject-positions, there is always room for change," for even though "[d]ominated 'subjects' do not maintain the kind of control which the word 'individual' might suggest [. . .] neither do they remain consistent or coherent in the passage of time: both they and the discourses they inhabit have histories and memories which alter in constitution over time" (xxxiv), and it is within these times of alteration "where, by virtue of the contradictions and disturbances in and among subject positions, the possibility (indeed, the actuality) of resistance to ideological pressure is allowed for (even though that resistance too must be produced in an ideological context)" (xxxv).[6]

Of course, as Atwill makes clear, "to question the normative values of an institution is not to question the importance of norms and values per se. In the same way, to say that knowledge is historically contingent is not to say that meaningful knowledge is impossible" (209). As Fish remarks, "[e]ntities like the world, language, and the self can still be named; and value judgments having to do with validity, factuality, accuracy, and propriety can still be made; but in every case these entities and values, along with the procedures by which they are identified and marshaled, will be inextricable from the social and historical circumstances in which they do their work" (*Doing* 345). So even if we agree with Isocrates and the postmodernists that truth is never certain or stable but

always contingent and situated, that does not mean that we should not take its production, distribution, and reception seriously.

I would now like to describe in further detail the three theories ("cultural studies/critical consciousness," "academic discourse," and "service learning") that, as I mentioned in the Introduction, have some of the same stated intentions as an Isocratean rhetoric, but, in comparison, only achieve these goals in a limited way. In the sections that follow, I will examine a few essays that provide representative examples of how these three theories inform the ways that writing courses are taught in real classrooms throughout the American academy. Of course, I realize it is somewhat unfair to single out certain descriptions and expect them to exemplify pedagogical strategies that are undoubtedly taught in widely various ways, but I will, nevertheless, proceed to do so in order to pave the way for my argument about why these various methods, although they do incorporate some of the same objectives as a (re)new(ed) Isocratean course in civic rhetoric, finally fall short of moving student writers and student writing beyond the fairly limited goals of personal expression, technical competency, professional accreditation, knowledge acquisition, and critical consumption.

Bergmann on "Academic Discourse and Academic Service"

As Linda Bergmann points out, the idea that "first-year composition serves to prepare students to read and write the academic discourse that they will continue to learn to manipulate as they proceed through their general education classes and their majors" is "pretty standard among composition directors and composition textbook writers," and was shared by most members of the English department at one university where she worked. Her colleagues' consensus that their composition courses provided "opportunities to master the genres, styles, audiences, and purposes of college writing" and "offer[ed] guided practice in reading and writing the discourses of the academy and the professions" (Lindemann, qtd. in Bergmann 50) was maintained in public and in

conferences with faculty members of other departments at the university. According to Bergmann, the tendency to "hang on to this notion of 'academic discourse,' with or without the final *s*" is prevalent among teachers of first-year composition throughout the American academy because "claiming that we teach something common to us all is a useful—and noncontroversial—way to explain to people in other disciplines that we do something larger than serving as 'grammar police'" (58).

I concur with Bergmann that many other composition programs share the public attitude that "the differences among professional discourses are value-free" (54) and that teachers of first-year writing can therefore address these differences as "merely stylistic" and can unproblematically help students "discover the different conventions among disciplines and advise them to model their discourses accordingly" (55). As she points out, what is left unproblematized by students and teachers alike when differences between disciplinary genres and conventions are limited to matters of style only is the existence of "significantly different conceptions of truth and value" that underlie these variations, conceptions "that are not only different but also contradictory" (55)—despite the fact that most faculty members themselves admittedly can not "agree about what should be taught in writing classes or what constitutes good or even acceptable college writing" (51) and despite the "very limited extent to which [we train our] students in first-year composition to do anything other than write papers for [our] particular class[es]" (51). What Bergmann suspects most teachers of first-year writing do share, however, is the belief that the conventions of the discipline of English are "the conventions of 'academic discourse' in general" and the tendency to teach our own discipline's rules "as general standards" (53). Of course, while some common, concrete vocabulary about the formal elements of writing must be shared among writing teachers and their colleagues, students should be taught that differences in writing conventions and applications of the formal elements of writing do exist.

We do our students and ourselves a disservice when we fail to admit that differences in disciplinary styles and generic conventions constitute not only different ways of writing on the surface but also different ways of thinking about the world and of acting upon it and when we do not deliberately and consciously admit that we are using reading and writing in our courses to teach particular conceptions of truth and value (like, for example, public citizenship and critical consciousness), and that we are doing so in ways that are significantly and importantly different (and even absent) from other ways of writing and reading that they will encounter in their courses devoted to more specifically vocational training. We also do ourselves a disservice by publicly seeming to "go along with the assumptions and expectations of engineers [or members of other disciplines, including some in the humanities], who sincerely believe that our job is to teach students to spell and to fix commas" (Bergmann 56), because these attitudes will be modeled by our students and will have a direct effect on public perceptions of the purpose of our courses. It is time, I am arguing, that we stop burying our actual (and generally laudatory) intentions and motivations for teaching our particular forms of student writing "somewhere deep under [our] academic throw rug" (Bergmann 52) and openly and deliberately declare that our courses are meant to prepare students to become active and engaged writers and citizens in the public sphere. Accepting this overt political nature of writing courses is one of the intentions of those who advocate teaching writing as "cultural studies."

Berlin on "Composition and Cultural Studies"

According to Berlin's description of a project at Purdue that attempted to "[bring] together the methods of composition studies with the methods of cultural studies in a freshman writing course" ("Composition" 47), the purpose of the course was to engage students in "the critique of discursive practices in a broadly constituted cultural realm" (47). The course was thus organized around "an *examination* of the cultural codes, the

social semiotics, that are working themselves out in shaping consciousness in our students" (50, emphasis added) and was more specifically focused on "the relation of current signifying practices to the structuring of subjectivities—of race, class, and gender formations, for example—in our students and ourselves" (50). The instructors were charged to "make students *aware* of the cultural codes—the various competing discourses—that attempt to influence who they are" and to encourage students "to *resist* and to negotiate these codes—these hegemonic discourses—in order to bring about more personally humane and socially equitable economic and political arrangements" (50, emphasis added). The students were instructed to "*read* essays that articulate the competing codes inscribed within the social formations that intersect each of [six] topics": "advertising, work, play, education, gender, and the possibilities of individuality" (50).

While the stated objectives of the course ("to prepare students for critical citizenship in a democracy," "to teach them to 'interrogate their texts,'" "to [teach] writing as an inescapably political act," to encourage "open debate and confrontation," and "to encourage in students both a critical response to their experience and a tolerance for the critical responses of others [so that] they will become more questioning as citizens and more tolerant of diversity of opinion in the ongoing formation of a democratic society" [51-52]) seem to echo many of my own goals for a (re)new(ed) Isocratean rhetoric, I would argue that this course's emphasis on *reading*, *evaluation*, and *awareness* of the issues limits the amount of time that can be spent focusing on *student writing*. Such a course structure, I would suggest, limits the chances for the students to take the critical consciousness and awareness they have achieved beyond the classroom, to motivate them to take their negotiations and evaluations into the public sphere, or to attempt to persuade others besides their classmates and their teachers to resist these social formations as well. I would also argue that this course's ambitious intent to cover six very diverse and complex topics in the course of one semester would give students little

time enter into a sustained examination of an issue and to follow-up on the potential responses to and consequences that their written evaluations (if they had the chance to distribute them publicly) might produce. One of the strengths of my suggested first-semester writing course (see Appendix A), on the other hand, is that it allows for sustained focus and follow-up on a single issue rather than asking students to try to grapple with several significant issues at once. In a similar manner, some "service-learning" courses that are based upon a kind of sustained "tutoring" model try to overcome this kind of ambitious "cultural studies" agenda by focusing more specifically on topics having to do with education, for example, and these courses also echo my sentiment that being political within the bounds of a "cultural studies" classroom finally cannot substitute for active civic participation in the broader community.

Brack and Hall on "Service-Learning in Composition"

Gay Brack's and Leanna Hall's essay, "Combining the Classroom and the Community," describes the Service Learning Project (SLP) that was developed at Arizona State University (ASU), a project that exemplifies many of the "tutoring" type of service-learning projects that are carried out in other college writing classes. According to Brack and Hall, the purpose of the SLP was to help teachers in English composition courses confront "students' lack of engagement with the material" and to change students' conception of the type of research done in first-year writing courses as consisting of "an empty exercise, a means of learning how to use the library or how to use correct citation, not as an avenue for changing someone's mind or making a difference in the world" (143). The mission of the project (a partnership between ASU students and after-school programs for at-risk children in local Phoenix school districts) was "(1) to motivate and assist at-risk children from kindergarten through high school age to develop the academic skills and the self-esteem that will allow them to succeed in

school, and (2) to assist university students to enhance their academic skills and to develop lifelong civic commitment" (145).

The undergraduate students in this project participated in electronic discussion forums in which they were asked to "share mutual concerns, discuss practical matters, and work on issues related to discipline, motivation, and self-esteem. In addition, they [were asked to] grapple with larger social and educational issues, such as gang intervention, preschool funding, and the role of educators today" (147). Each posting to the electronic discussion list was required to be "the equivalent of a one-page essay" (147-148). In addition to the electronic discussion, the students were given seven formal writing assignments. Five of these assignments were summaries and critiques of course readings (148), and two were research papers that were supposed to "demonstrate effective analysis and synthesis of both [the tutoring experience and the official research]" (149). While I think it is encouraging that the instructors found that the students who "self-selected" (146) for these service-learning composition courses (which, I would argue, is somewhat problematic and limiting in itself) were "more motivated to write because they [were] writing with a purpose" since "the final audiences for their papers [were] members of the community, future tutors, and the project's administrators, not just their instructors" (151), and they noticed that student were "dealing with issues of literacy, social justice, and other topics related to their community experiences" (151) in more "genuine" and "meaningful" (151) ways than in writing courses that were based strictly on the "library research" paradigm, I am still suspicious of the focus on "helping" the "less fortunate" that such "tutoring" models of service learning represent. I am also concerned with how such programs might cause students to focus on the individuals they are tutoring as being the "unfortunate" ones who "have problems" or who have "made bad choices," rather than engaging with the broader social dimensions presented by the existence of such programs. Finally, although I find the writing requirement to synthesize the more familiar "research" method with the tutoring experience to be

valuable and worthwhile (I have, in fact, incorporated a similar "synthetic" assignment into my own course, see Appendix A), I still suspect that much of the writing done in this course in response to the assigned reading does not progress beyond "personal" responses, and, although I do not doubt that the student writing was helpful to the project's administrators and other university tutors, I question how much such "research-based" writing really was designed for distribution to the members of the community. Writing courses that have as one of their requirements a "community-based" writing project, by contrast, specifically encourage students to produce writing that is meant to be utilized and distributed to the members of certain non-academic communities.

Bacon on "Community Service Writing"

In contrast to the "tutoring" service learning project described by Brack and Hall, Nora Bacon describes a project at Stanford in which students were asked to produce writing specifically *for* community organizations, writing that would be published and made available to public audiences in the form of newsletters, brochures, pamphlets, and fact sheets. In addition to these community writing projects, however, students were required to write a research paper specifically meant to be turned in to the teacher. What Bacon found was that in this type of course, students felt that their writing "was meaningful because it had a 'real' audience and purpose" and it "made a genuine contribution" based on a perceived community need; students gathered "valuable information about or insight into social issues"; and students were "highly motivated and thoroughly engaged in their writing" (41). In other words, according to Bacon, most participants of the course began "functioning not as *students* but as *writers*" (42).

One problem, however, was that some students (particularly those who were assigned to projects that might not have been of their own choosing) did not make this role shift and still saw their teachers as the "more authentic" audience (42), and some, in fact, never even distributed the requested writing projects to the outside communities for

whom they were supposed to be producing them. Even so, argues Bacon, community-based writing is worthwhile for such students because it "denaturalizes academic writing [by] introducing self-consciousness about the business of writing for a teacher" (43). Furthermore, while some students struggled with the requirement to write for community-based projects because they felt they had to cater to the needs and values of the agencies for whom they were writing and thus had to suppress their own opinions (which, as Bacon admits, is more dangerous when the writing does have real consequences beyond the classroom and the assignment of a grade), and while some students finally failed to appropriate a "voice" that suited the community for which they were writing or failed to learn the appropriate generic conventions or different criteria of effectiveness for the non-academic writing they were being asked to produce (42-51), Bacon argues that such failures served to demonstrate the need for writing teachers "to prepare students for multiple literacy demands" (52). In addition, those students who did distribute their work properly and who did receive feedback from both the community members *and* the teacher also became distinctly aware of the necessity to "anticipate the needs of multiple audiences" (43).

So, rather than limiting our writing instruction to "personal" and "literary" essays and expecting "a body of skills and knowledge about writing developed in a single rhetorical context to have universal application" (53)—which, as I have pointed out, is often done in writing programs based (publicly, at least) on the theory of training students to join the "academic discourse community"—Bacon suggests that we should give students more opportunities to "work on both academic assignments and a range of nonacademic writing tasks" (53), so that they can begin to negotiate the competing suggestions and expectations of their teachers and their community audiences and can raise questions "about why texts assume particular forms and functions" (53). "As they investigate questions such as these," claims Bacon, "students may develop an understanding of rhetorical variation that prepares them to navigate in multiple discourse

communities" (53), and we might be able to help "prepare them for the multiple literacy demands that await them in their [nonacademic] lives" (52).

While I certainly applaud the intentions of such courses, and while I, too, am arguing for the need to train our students in "multiple literacy demands," I would suggest that the difficulties of finding willing community partners, of choosing appropriate agencies for student writers to work with, and of assuring that the tasks the students are assigned by the agencies "are neither trivial nor dependent upon deep background knowledge" (Bacon 52) may be too much of a burden for many writing teachers and writing program administrators. In the course that I am proposing, student writers would be writing for a variety of audiences who would be demanding them to engage in multiple literacies, but, although they would be distributing their writing to audiences outside of the classroom as well as to their teacher, they would not be expected to produce a particular kind of writing for a particular agency (although they certainly could if they so desired). Instead, they would be sending their writing to newspapers, magazines, business leaders, national and local politicians, school board members, etc. based upon the particular intent of their writing and based upon their own motivation to engage in the negotiation of and debate about a particular social or political issue of interest. I will now suggest how the goals of inventing and distributing informed opinions and taking responsible public actions might be achieved in a (re)new(ed) Isocratean classroom and imagine what an Isocratean rhetorically centered conception of higher education might specifically look like in twenty-first century American colleges and universities.

Goal: Production, Critique, and Public Distribution of Discourse

The foremost goal of a (re)new(ed) civic rhetoric would be to give students ample practice at composing, distributing, and responding to texts that deal with the most significant issues of the time.[7] Therefore, the texts that they produce will be read and

criticized not only by their classmates and their teacher(s) but also will be put into public circulation and sent to people who have the power to respond to their writing with social and political actions. In other words, in the course I am proposing, students will produce and distribute meaningful writing that is enmeshed in real rhetorical contexts and that will actually be read with interest and acted upon by audiences other than a teacher/corrector, rather than writing that summarizes or strings together the comments and decisions made by the authors in the assigned reading or the views of the teacher as recorded in lecture notes,[8] that demonstrates an accumulated knowledge of the subject matter of the course, that is commented on by peers who never get the chance to read or respond to the "final" version of the paper, and that, in the end, is evaluated largely for its formal correctness, its adherence to "academic writing" standards, or its demonstration that the student has, in fact, done the assigned reading and paid attention in class, and is then generally forgotten by students and teachers alike.

As I argued earlier, unlike many of today's teachers, whose pedagogical imperative typically is figuring out how to enable first-year students to attain proficiency in the supposedly generalizable (but actually quite varied and discipline-specific) discourse of the academy, Isocrates felt strongly that students "should concentrate on what is possible, attainable, and of practical value" and that "the educator or teacher must contend with the individual's ability to face problems in the society in which he lives" (Nash et al 6). What this translates to in the twenty-first century is that our foremost concern as teachers of discourse production and consumption ought to be to help our students become active problem-solvers and informed participants in the communities in which they live and work—both inside the academy and out. In other words, instead of teaching a discipline that is full of "empty talk" and "hair-splitting" and is "not even remembered for any length of time after [it] is learned" (*Antidosis* 262), along with Isocrates, I believe that citizen subjects need to be given the chance to write about the things that impact their lives, to enter conversations they can contribute meaningfully to

(which is often not the case when they write for teachers who clearly know much more than they do about an assigned topic), and to make assertions for which they can take responsibility and to which can "apply their minds" in order to "discern the consequences which for the most part grow out of them" (*Antidosis* 184).

Our students, that is, should not only be taught the conventions of college writing, but should also be given the opportunity to see themselves as writers whose writing *can matter* in the world. As we have seen, in most current manifestations of first-year writing classes, undergraduate writing (especially that of "beginning" writers) is never put into circulation among the "intended" audience members (whether they are imagined to be "academics" or an "educated audience" in general, professionals in a specific field, or even a highly overgeneralized "public audience"), and so students quickly learn that what they have to say does not really matter, as long as they say it in a way that is acceptable to their current writing teacher (who is the only evaluator whose comments finally matter). It may be, as Davidson suggests, that "[t]here is a gap between our expectations as those teaching argument that our students will learn a useful, transferable skill, and the students' own experience of academic life as a bewildering and ever changing set of expectations which differ not only subject by subject but indeed tutor by tutor" (119). Under such circumstances, perhaps it is not surprising that "students treat writing as complete only once they have received the grade and when asked about teacher's comments on their pieces, students often remember only the grade," especially when "the reading practices of instructors are governed primarily by a need to grade and their comments are influenced by the need to justify the grade" (Freedman 131).

As distinguished from many of today's writing courses in which students learn "to write only intransitively—as, about, and to nothing in particular" (S. Miller, *Textual* 196), Isocrates did not design assignments for which he expected his students to produce discourses that were removed from concrete situations or that lacked genuine motivating circumstances (he, of course, did not assign any grades). Instead, the first question he

asked all of his students to consider was "what is the object to be accomplished by the discourse as a whole and by its parts?" Only once that had been discovered and the matter had been "accurately determined," would they begin to "seek the rhetorical elements whereby that which [they had] set out to do [could] be elaborated and fulfilled" (*To The Children of Jason* 8-9) because Isocrates felt that obtaining "a knowledge of the elements out of which we make and compose all discourses is not so very difficult" (*Against* 16). Today, we often operate with the reverse attitude. When we try to teach students the rhetorical elements of an "academic essay" absent any social or political objective to be accomplished, we assume that our students can become skilled writers by learning prescribed forms (e.g., the five-paragraph theme, the research paper, the scholarly argument, etc.) that are removed from any real writing situation (since they will never be distributed to the intended audience) and generally take little account of the writer's purpose, and we blithely pretend that the techniques for research and the presentation of evidence that we enforce in our English classes will be equally applicable in any future context or academic class, which, as I noted earlier, is typically not the case at all.

The problem with these techniques, as Aviva Freedman explains, is that "you cannot write writing: You have to write something to somebody. Neither the something nor the somebody are sufficiently actualized in a composition classroom" (137). However, by following the example of Isocrates, who required his students "to combine in practice the particular things which they have learned, in order that they may grasp them more firmly and bring their theories into closer touch with the occasions for applying them" (*Antidosis* 183-184), and who further counseled them that "study will show you the way, but training yourself in the actual doing of things will give you the power to deal with affairs" (*To Nicocles* 35), we can demonstrate to our students that "writing well is not a matter of cleaning up something like 'style' or 'mere rhetoric' but deals with *changing what is real*" (Booth 73). As I argued earlier, rather than

proclaiming that the main value of our courses is that they provide access to future academic success and job attainment, we should consider abiding by the educative principles of Isocrates, who strove to teach his students to investigate thoroughly the complexities of everyday life and to become more articulate about them in order to have a chance to participate in debates and decisions about the formation of the future—both their own and the community's. As he told the children of Jason, "nothing can be intelligently accomplished unless first, with full forethought, you reason and deliberate how you ought to direct your own future" (*To the Children* 9). Of course, by "your," he meant not "you" as a privatized individual, but "you" as a public citizen whose future is implicated with the future of other citizens[9] within the community.

Isocrates also insisted that his students cultivate the ability to reason and deliberate because, as he told them, "progress is made, not through the agency of those that are satisfied with things as they are, but through those who correct, and have the courage constantly to change, anything which is not as it should be" (*Evagoras* 7). The most democratic, just, and effective way to bring about such changes, as Isocrates knew, is through the proficient production, broad distribution, and careful evaluation of public discursive performances. As twenty-first century writing teachers, we should therefore model our pedagogy after Isocrates' in order to help our students produce and distribute writing that discovers new ideas and new ways of saying things in order to lead others to take action, not just writing that evaluates and synthesizes others' already-completed discursive performances. We should also allow our students to experience the connections between the writing they produce and distribute and the social, material, and political actions that become possible as a result of that writing. We need to stop allowing our instruction to thrive on the "passivity of its classroom students, who have learned to give up their personalities and even their minds (temporarily, but leading to habit) to get an easy 'A,'" and we need to stop allowing ourselves and our students to enter a "school-induced stupor" because "the sheer lack of engagement in anything

resembling a real-world writing act for both writing teachers and writing students permits both to engage in a collusion of diminished effort" (Kemp 192). We need to recognize, as Isocrates did, that "while it is easy by eloquence to overdo the trivial themes, it is difficult to reach the heights of goodness [on topics of consequence]" (*Helen* 12-13).

However, once we as instructors agree to follow Isocrates' lead and recognize our students as "actual people in actual writing situations," as writers who "do not write without reference to the appropriateness of [composing] in a specific circumstance," and as individuals who have a "responsibility to account for the place their writing will take among others in specific situations," then our students can "become aware of the window on full participation in discourse communities that their writing represents" (S. Miller, *Textual* 198-99). Once we give our students the opportunity to write about issues they think are worth the effort (rather than the ones their textbooks or their instructors tell them they are supposed to care about), once we help them see that "[w]riting, itself, is a struggle in and *with* social order. It is a struggle to be heard, to make people pay attention, and to discover ways to attend to the domain of the possible," (Hurlbert and Blitz 4), and once we begin to teach writing "as an event in which knowledge is preserved or resisted and changed, [and] as the material out of which we not only (re)create ourselves and others, our understanding of culture, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, but also as the material with which we can resist the narratives when they do not accurately reflect our real lives" (Hurlbert and Blitz 7), then we can leave behind the stigmas of our classes functioning as "service courses" or "gatekeeper" or "weed-out" courses as many first-year writing programs are currently characterized. As Davis argues, we need to be aware that "writing is often sacrificed *in the name of 'composition,'* in the name of this 'discipline's' service-oriented and pre-established requirements" (6).

Despite these very real obstacles, it is my hope that once we ask our students, as Isocrates did, to "be minded towards contingencies as men who indeed exercise their best judgment, but are not sure what the future may hold in store" (*On the Peace* 8), that is, to

use their writing to respond to issues "that demand attention but do not necessarily lend themselves to permanent answers or to ultimate conviction," once we ask them to write about "the kinds of ideas that face us everyday, as we confront issues of ethics and politics, or interpretation or revaluation," the kinds of ideas that "demand our best thinking because they urge themselves on us insistently as we listen to others take positions" (Gage 20-21), and the kinds of everyday problems that "need to be solved, but where nobody has an instructor's manual or answer key" (Fulwiler 180), not only will students' motivation to write and their interest in writing increase, but our students will also become habituated to participating actively and consistently in the negotiation and resolution of everyday affairs, just as Isocrates' students did. According to Isocrates, it was only when his students could "manage well the circumstances which they encounter day by day" and possessed "a judgment which is accurate in meeting occasions as they arise and rarely misses the expedient course of action" that he would consider them to be "educated" (*Panathenaicus* 30); I am suggesting that perhaps it is time we considered doing the same.

Aside from preparing students to meet the demands of everyday decision-making, another advantage of having students write about actual situations and for actual public audiences is that such meaningful assignments offer "opportunities for students to analyze actual discursive practices, to teach the teacher about them, and to develop strategies and understandings inductively," which then allows them to "gain experience in gleaning the conventions and expectations of communities in which they can continue and with whom they can dialogue" (Lauer 68). What this means is that rather than learning the rules of "Standard Written English" out of a grammar handbook for the sake of learning the rules and being tested or evaluated on them, students who write for real audiences in real writing situations and who want their ideas to be heard and acted upon will have a vested interest in discovering and complying with the local grammatical and stylistic expectations of those audiences. In other words, a classroom focused on

Isocratean, communal, civic rhetoric would not focus "on the grammar and convention of Standard White English but on strategies for planning and collaboration that let writers make strategic decisions in the face of multiple conventions and discourses" (Flower, "Literate" 253). This is not to say, of course, that Standard Written/White English would not be taught as *one* possible stylistic choice. On the contrary, the conventions of formal English would certainly be offered to the students as an option when deemed appropriate and effective. In fact, instructors would be remiss if they did not show students the rewards of mastering these conventions, such as "possible upward social mobility, better job opportunities, and other cultural rewards" (Welch, *Contemporary* 90). Of course, many students come in to our classrooms wanting to learn this dominant discourse because they see college as a "gateway to the dominant culture" (Lowe 18), and while we should not deny them that chance, we must also be sure to inform our students "about the way formal-informal distinctions are used to dismiss [other] people" (Myers 272).

In addition, by following Isocrates' lead, we can convince our students that the formal aspects of writing are not simply rules made up by teachers so that we can test them and gleefully point out their mistakes or a system that must be mastered in order to gain access to middle-class wealth and power , but that an awareness of the various localized conventions can genuinely aid writers in expressing their ideas and, just as importantly, can aid their audiences in interpreting them. As Gage observes:

> If writing is good for the writer in any other than a utilitarian sense—if it serves to clarify or improve the writer's understanding—then it must provide the occasion for genuine inquiry and the exercise of responsible judgment. These are what writing teaches students, if it requires them to have ideas of their own and to accept the responsibilities that come with having them. All of the technical aspects of writing can be taught in this context, because those aspects—such as correctness, efficient sentence structure, or a coherent organization—are among the responsibilities that

writers accept when they are engaged in the communication of ideas that matter to them. But when taught as isolated skills, apart from the writer's commitment to an idea, these matters can reduce a student's sense of commitment to thought rather than increase it. (19)

I contend that if we agree to follow Isocrates' lead and replace "a standard of correctness by the fluid and dynamic standard of effectiveness, the teaching of strategies rather than of rules and maxims" (Fish, *Doing* 346-7), our students should in turn learn to select writing strategies, "on the basis of calculations that have at least the probability associated with rules of thumb" (Fish, *Doing* 461). They should begin to understand, that is, that because their writing will always be guided by "the rules of thumb that are the content of any settled practice, by the assumed definitions, distinctions, criteria of evidence, measures of adequacy, and such, which not only define the practice but structure the understanding of the agent who thinks of himself as a 'competent member'" (Fish, *Doing* 323) of some provisional community, that it is only within these localized and contextualized rules of thumb that one "can think about alternative courses of action or, indeed, think at all" (Fish, *Doing* 323). Furthermore, because "the rules defining a [language] game and the 'moves' playable within it *must* be local, in other words, agreed upon by its present players and subject to eventual cancellation," students should learn to seek out "knowledge of language games as such and [should make] the decision to assume responsibility for their rules and effects" (Lyotard, *Postmodern* 66).

I suspect that through the process of engaging with audiences both within and beyond the confines of the classroom, students will not only become "versed and practiced in the application of their art" (*Antidosis* 187) but also will begin to regard themselves as "competent" (if impermanent) and accountable members of the provisional social communities among which they will be producing and distributing their discourses and who in turn will be responding to their writing—responses to which the student writers must listen and for which they must assume responsibility. Through these

discursive exchanges, they will learn "to be stronger in their thinking" (*Antidosis* 185) and "to reason better, because in any genuine exchange of ideas [their] reasons will encounter resistance [and calls] for equivocation, qualification, and improvement" (Gage 20-21). When they no longer regard such calls for improvement as valuable only for the sake of a higher grade, but learn to understand them as having a noticeable effect on the acceptance or dismissal of their ideas, when they begin to recognize that "wanting to be correct" is "a consequence of wanting to be believed" (Gage 26), I suspect that not only will students' motivation to follow these conventions improve, but that their writing will improve in form and content as well. As Ohmann exclaims, "if anything, the student who sees rhetoric implicated with his own identity, with integrity, with community, and with an interpretation of experience should be especially ready to grant the importance of choosing words with care" ("Lieu" 305). Once our students begin to appreciate the importance of choosing their words strategically, we may begin to see fewer instances of "bad thinking" following on the heels of "bad writing"[10] (or vice versa) or "good" writing that has no investment in its purpose or discusses nothing of importance to the student or her community. McComiskey's observation that "students write best about subjects that impact their lives everyday" (*Teaching* 56) seems to support this theory, as do Ann George's comment that "once students [connect] language use to their private lives, their writing improve[s] dramatically" (103) and Fulwiler's claim that "students are more easily engaged in writing tasks that seem real and useful; a regular workout with real-world tasks increases student motivation and strengthens their voices" (183).

So, how might we implement such real world, public writing assignments into our twenty-first century composition classrooms? To begin with, we need to stop asking our students to write about issues that we assign them or that are conveniently anthologized for us in composition textbooks, issues that they may not take an interest in or that they may not feel impact their everyday lives. We need to stop asking them to write essays on racial profiling and human cloning, for example, that will never leave the classroom, that

no one will ever read and act upon except the teacher who gives them a grade.[11] We need to give them a sincere choice about what they want to write about and to decide what subjects and events affect their lives in such meaningful ways that they are impelled to write about them.[12] As Isocrates said, it is not becoming for people "to waste their time on little things, nor yet to make the kinds of speeches which will improve no whit the lives of those whom they convince." Instead, writers should spent their time on the kind of discursive performances that, if carried out in action, "will both deliver the authors from their present distress and win for them the credit of bringing to pass great blessings for the rest of the world" (*Panegyricus* 189). While these may seem like lofty goals, I would argue that they *are achievable* for our students, even if on a slightly less grand scale.

For example, we can ask our students to write letters to real editors or public figures (see Appendix A).[13] When we do so, we should not present this assignment as a generic academic exercise for an imagined, but never realized, audience. Instead, we need to insist that our students actually submit their letters and follow up on the responses (or lack of responses) that they receive. We need to ask them to examine the contexts in which those letters will be written and to consider carefully in what medium and for what projected audience they plan to distribute them, and we need to require them to familiarize themselves with the conventions and expectations of their chosen medium and audience. In addition, we need to insist that they follow up on and take responsibility for the outcomes of their discursive performances, which is the second major goal of a (re)new(ed) civic rhetoric.

Goal: Social Responsibility and Informed Judgment

It seems clear to me that one of the reasons that Isocrates has not been championed as model in the past century or so is that he elevated "honesty of character" over "facility in oratory" (*Against* 21) in his teaching, an attitude that was highly

incompatible with the modern emphases on "correct" writing (remember "Johnny"?) and climbing the social ladder. While we have recently tempered our focus on formal correctness as the main determining factor of a student's facility with discourse, we still tend to promote such language adeptness over any character-building or community-building aspects that our instruction provides. When we fail to approach writing instruction as "a process of defining and discovering an ethic for participating in discourse communities [and] for negotiating conflicts among views," or as a way of determining "how we as writers ought to be responsible to the knowledge we create, to the views we assert, and for our visions of self, society, and others" (Toner 9), we are doing ourselves, our students, and our society a disservice.[14] This is why I am arguing that it is time we agree to reintroduce some of Isocrates' overt emphasis on character development and public citizenship into our own language instruction, especially in light of the three most commonly repeated or emphasized comments made by the public about undergraduate education. According to Kimball, the most frequent comment is the fairly familiar one that "language study deserves a great deal more attention because present college graduates cannot read, write, or speak effectively" (263). The next two points, however, may surprise many people. "The second point consistently raised," writes Kimball, "is the charge that colleges do not and should inculcate a sense of 'values' in their graduates. The complement to this second point—college graduates should have acquired a sense of values—is a third point: the affirmation that college graduates should become good citizens" (263-267). One of the great values of the (re)new(ed) Isocratean course in rhetoric and civic discourse that I am proposing is that it is capable of accomplishing each of these three points.

As we have seen, Isocrates knew that facility with language is almost always necessary if someone seeks to improve her own fortune or the general welfare or to advance private or public interests. He was convinced that humans only had their own discourse—and not some transcendental truth—with which to judge, interpret, and act

upon each other and the world, and he knew that the decisions reached and the actions taken as a result of discourse use were a serious business with lasting consequences. Therefore, he insisted that his students make significant inquiries when making their ethical and political choices and when passing along their judgments to public audiences and he made certain that they held themselves accountable for promoting their positions. A "well-educated" person, he said, "must, as the result of his training in whatever discipline, show ability to deliberate and decide" (*To Nicocles* 51). Such a person must then put into effect through his discursive performances "whatever seems to [him] upon careful thought to be the best course" (*To Nicocles* 38). In other words, a person of "honest character" would not be content to stop at conjecture, but would put her thoughts into action; she would, that is, be "capable not only of speech but of action" (*To Philip* 13), a "speaker of words and a doer of deeds" (*Iliad* 9.443).

By returning to an Isocratean concept of discourse instruction as a way to engage students in a continuous cycle of putting "careful thought" into effect and showing the "ability to deliberate and decide," we can broaden students' awareness not only about the economic and academic reasons we are requiring them to take writing classes but also inform them more explicitly about the social and political reasons, too. In this way, we can help them see that there are indeed meaningful and important purposes beyond receiving a grade or being hired for a job to sitting down and thinking and arguing on paper. By using an Isocratean model and heeding his advice that "likely conjecture about useful things is far preferable to exact knowledge of the useless" (*Helen* 5), we can also get our students into the habit of deliberating with others, negotiating the best interests of their provisional communities, and making *kairotic* judgments that may lead to a more just society. These skills, as Isocrates understood, are essential in a world that is always in need of constant reevaluation.

As he argued 2500 years ago, discourse production should not be regarded as "a casual task, nor one to be attacked in a spirit of indifference" but should be approached

with "close reasoning and [a] love of knowledge" (*To Philip* 20), instead of "as simply as [one] would teach the letters of the alphabet, not having taken the trouble to examine into the nature of each kind of knowledge" (*Against* 10). It is worth repeating that such an approach to teaching would help our students see that writing is an occasion for making their ideas matter and that it would require them to take responsibility for advocating certain positions, for taking particular actions, and for judging and weighing their ideas and their own ideological and historical situatedness in relation to the ideas and contructedness of other citizens, institutions, and provisional communities. Accepting these responsibilities, I would go on to argue with Isocrates, also has the effect of instilling values such as "honesty of character" and of making them better public citizens because this kind of an approach to discourse instruction "is capable of leading [students] on to self-improvement and a greater degree of intelligence on many subjects" (*Against* 15). Of course, writing is not the only form of language instruction that students must encounter in order to enhance their critical and expressive abilities. A (re)new(ed) course in rhetoric and civic discourse would therefore, like the Isocratean course that serves as its model, *integrate* the various forms of *logos* rather than treating them as disparate skills.

Goal: Integrating Reading, Writing, and Speaking

Much like the communications courses of the mid-twentieth century,[15] the course in rhetoric and civic discourse that I am proposing would not be specifically structured as a "writing" course *per se*, nor would it be presented as a "reading" course or a class in "public speaking." Instead, like Isocrates' course, it would synthesize all of the elements of discursive learning and discursive application in order to enhance the students' capacities for making informed decisions and acting upon them, that is, to prepare them for the composition, critique, and performance of various forms and mediums of discourse as well as for debating, interacting, and communicating with other citizen

subjects in the public sphere. As David Russell points out, one of the advantages of such a course designed to teach not just composition but also other language activities is that "students have more opportunity to learn who the participants in an activity system are, what they do, and how and why they do it—and thus what, how, and why they write the ways they do" ("Activity" 64).

To begin with, the reading done in this course would not be found in textbooks that take the material out of its everyday context. I have already mentioned some disadvantages to such decontextualized readings, but I would like to point out a few more. One problem with readings that are assigned to be read out of context is that "[n]owhere does the text help the student to learn the discursive practices of [its] complex and sophisticated readerships" (Lauer 65).[16] In addition, these texts rarely encourage students to produce texts that will be presented to the same kinds of audiences who may have engaged with or commented upon the anthologized readings in the first place, which leads students once again to assume that the "school" writing they produce in response to these essays does not really matter since no one outside of their classroom will read it, and, once it has been given a grade, it will rarely, if ever, be mentioned again. Welch agrees that "nearly every sample of writing in freshman textbooks is removed from the place it came from. These pieces are characteristically made to appear to come out of nowhere and they invite student writers to compose pieces out of nowhere" ("Ideology" 273)—composed pieces that essentially *go* nowhere themselves either.

Isocrates, however, always advised his students to put the texts they read and heard into historical and social context. As he put it, "how can men wisely pass judgment on the past or take counsel for the future unless they examine and compare the arguments of [other] speakers?" (*On the Peace* 11). Of course, he did not believe they could, so he instructed his students to "reflect on the fortunes and accidents which befall both common men and kings, for if you are mindful of the past you will plan better for the future" (*To Nicocles* 35). In other words, he encouraged his students to become familiar

with past precedents, conventions, and styles, to consider the specific situations which moved both the "common men and kings" to compose their discourses, to reflect upon the consequences—the "fortunes" or the "accidents"—that occurred as a result of the public distribution and reception of those texts, and to think carefully about why the texts they encountered from the past (whether fictional or historical) were still in circulation or present in the minds and imaginations of the members of their audience and therefore could still be regarded as having some currency and influence in the present circumstances.

Isocrates expected his students to regard the historical, literary, and popular texts they heard and read primarily as potential models to draw upon and dialogue with as a way of deliberating about shared problems and resolving the controversies that they would encounter in everyday life with the best possible results, rather than as aesthetic objects to be appreciated or content to be learned, as often occurs in today's college writing courses—particularly those that focus on "literature and composition."[17] Isocrates himself "elected not to write the kind of discourse which deals with myths nor that which abounds in marvels and fictions," but the kind of discourse which was devoted to the "welfare and safety" of all people (*Panathenaicus* 1). This is not to say, however, that Isocrates allowed his students to neglect reading or attending the performances of the kind of texts we have come to identify as "literary." On the contrary, he counseled his students not to assume that they could "afford to be ignorant of any either of the famous poets or of the sages" (*To Nicocles* 13). The difference was how he expected his students to interact with such texts. Isocrates would heartily agree with Gage's assertion that

> reading the thoughts of others is necessary, not only to provide students
> with "models" of decorous writing, but to stimulate them to assert their
> own agreements and disagreements so that they can explore their own
> reasons along with the available arguments of others. The reading
> students do in a writing class must be critical reading, in the sense that

> students are not required to accept and memorize information on the basis
> of the writer's authority but encouraged to question the writer's
> conclusions on the basis of the writer's reasons. (26)

Therefore, in a (re)new(ed) Isocratean classroom, literary texts, no less than their practical counterparts, would be regarded as sources for discovering the discourse conventions and shared values of potential audiences, would be expected to generate or stimulate student writing, and would be utilized and cited in an effort to impact the "welfare and safety" of others and to accomplish other influential practical purposes in the world.

Another advantage that Isocrates saw in insisting that his students read and listen[18] to all kinds of texts was that these encounters clearly revealed to them that "it is possible to discourse on the same subject matter in many different ways" (*Panegyricus* 8). Certainly one of the most important lessons that students can learn in the course I am proposing is how to negotiate these kinds of differences. In this course, everyone will have a chance to promote and support his or her own opinions and decisions, and everyone else (including public audiences) will have a chance to challenge them. In such an environment, students should quickly learn to take responsibility for their positions because they will be concentrating on the same issue throughout the semester and performing continuous follow-ups on the responses triggered by the distribution of their texts to classroom and public audiences (see Appendices A and B). In addition, they will have several chances to clarify and retract their statements, and they can always reserve the right to change their minds since, as Isocrates said, "honest men do not remain fixed in opinions" but "are in quest of the truth and are ready to be convinced by those who plead a just cause" (*Antidosis* 170). Because the texts the students will produce in this class will be composed in relation to specific contexts and sent to various audiences, it should also become plain to them that the "truth" or the morally responsible choice is not always the same in every situation, and that the production, distribution, and reception of

their discourses can contribute to the outcome of what is determined to be "true" and "just" in a particular situation and can lead to real actions of material and social consequence, whether those discourses are delivered in written or oral form, on paper or on electronic screens.

Although Isocrates clearly championed written composition because written arguments could be "scrutinized" repeatedly and pored over more closely than oral compositions (*To Philip* 29), could be submitted to others "for judgment" rather than "publish[ed] hastily" like many impromptu oral arguments (*Panathenaicus* 272), and could "be published throughout Hellas [and] abroad" (*Evagoras* 74), he never dismissed the importance of training his students to think on their feet and to compose *kairotic* oral discourses. As I mentioned earlier, in today's composition courses, where so much emphasis is placed on the recursive writing process and revision, students are often less prepared to think through and construct arguments, defend positions, and seek new knowledge *on the spot*, which can be to their detriment in everyday situations, as can their lack of preparation to confront live and interactive audiences. In fact, not only in writing courses, but throughout the academy, "speech is a neglected issue of higher education" (Mason and Washington 20), particularly with respect to impromptu negotiations and on-the-spot decision-making. This neglect would be remedied by the Isocratean course that I am proposing.

As I described earlier, one way Isocrates had his students practice such *kairotic* deliberations to sharpen their critical thinking and ad hoc composing skills in the classroom was by pitting them against each other in oral debates performed before the entire class.[19] Too often in today's classrooms we seek to avoid such open conflicts because, unlike the ancient Greeks, contemporary Americans are frequently raised to regard disagreements or arguments as unhealthy and unproductive confrontations[20] rather than as a responsible means of considering alternatives and arriving at informed decisions by increasing the scope of our knowledge. As educators, we need to remind our students

that knowledge "is always constructed socially and that public action is guided by informed debate among members of a democratic community" (Jarratt, "Feminism" 114). As Trimbur remarks, "students can learn to agree to disagree, not because 'everyone has their own opinion,' but because justice demands that we recognize the inexhaustibility of difference and that we organize the conditions in which we live and work accordingly" (qtd. in Toner 13). We also need to recognize the value of providing students with the chance to receive immediate comments and criticisms on their composing skills and critical strategies. As Connors points out, and as Isocrates clearly knew, unlike written comments, "a teacher's comments on an oration may be heard and digested by all in class" ("Rhetoric" 67), as can peers' comments, thereby benefiting everyone and not just the individual performer. In addition, the speaker is given a lesson in responsibility because "the publicity, mutuality, and reciprocity of speech makes it a good vehicle of self-correction," something that is "at the heart of learning" (Mason and Washington 21).[21]

While "the oral communal performance of the old college," which community members and public figures attended and participated in, may be "unworkable" in today's academic culture, as Russell suggests (*Writing* 302-3), an alternative to such public oral performances can be found in electronic interactions. As Welch remarks, "the immediacy of appearance, the attractiveness of the liveness, is part of the performative power of the symbol systems of secondary orality" (*Contemporary* 153). That is why one of the assignments I am recommending for the course in rhetoric and public discourse is participation in an electronic "bulletin board" or "list-serv" discussion (see Appendix A). While such forums are not strictly "live," the discourse conventions are generally less formal than other written discursive performances and the reactions and responses from the audience are more immediate and less crafted than in more conventional written discursive situations, as well as more public. Engaging in such "conversations" would therefore act as an important bridge for students between the

immediacy of oral performances and the greater control expected in most formal written performances. Engaging in such conversations would also help students realize that not all of their writing will be assessed and corrected by a teacher, but that it *will* be expected to conform to certain local and contextual conditions of propriety or certain rules and usage conventions in order to be judged as worthwhile and coherent by the other participants in the discussion. As teachers, part of our job should be to assist our students in their negotiation, enactment, and possibly even disruption of these various discursive norms and conventions. Even so, it is an unavoidable reality that another part of our job as educators in American higher education, at least for the foreseeable future, will be to make formal assessments of our students' discursive performances.

Isocratean Assessment

Although Isocrates was the first educator in the Western world to establish a permanent institution of higher education, he was not the first to establish a formal grading system; in fact, he never "graded" his students' discursive performances at all. His students' successes or failures were not determined within the walls of the schoolhouse, but out in the community. Within the classroom setting, Isocrates and the other students in the class would certainly pass judgment on the discourse and opine whether they thought it would be successful or not,[22] but it was only once the discourse was performed or delivered in its intended context that anyone could say that the work accomplished its purpose well or fell short of its objective. Isocrates would agree with Susan Miller that "good writing" cannot "be recognized for qualities apart from its actual outcomes, apart from its verifiable appeal to widely separate and specific readerships" (*Textual* 167). As he said himself, those discourses judged as "worthy" should be appraised "in the light of conduct that is useful" (*To Nicocles* 50), and he considered the most powerful discourses to be those that were used to "contend against others on matters

which are open to dispute" or that were meant to "seek light for ourselves on things which are unknown" (*Nicocles* 8).

However, as I have tried to demonstrate, our current emphasis generally is on assessing the technical proficiency of student writing that is "turned in for a grade." We grade our students' papers, in other words, based primarily on their adherence to the grammar rules of "Standard Written English" and the conventions of the "academic essay" (e.g., thesis statement, topic sentences, impersonal tone, transitions, required number of sources, etc.) within a social vacuum and outside of any real world context. I mentioned earlier that many contemporary composition teachers feel uncomfortable when asked to evaluate the quality and potential repercussions of students' ideas rather than their mastery of rules and grading expectations. As Flower explains, our conception of "textual literacy" tends to "focus on textuality rather than on intellectual action or social involvement" and it has a "prescriptive concern with correctness, conventions, or style" and a "history of atomistic, linguistically reductive preoccupation with error," so that "the bottom line" is "not insight or persuasiveness but text" (252). Such decontextualized and generalized criteria, I would argue, are less likely than Isocrates' methods of appraisal to prepare our students to use their discourses to reach decisions in their own minds, to collaborate on reaching decisions with others, or to negotiate the multiple conventions of the discursive situations they will encounter outside of our classrooms.

As Welch argues, "One of the major problems of the concept of skill-based writing instruction is that it suggests quantifiability. If you can write a topic sentence, then you can show that sentence as proof that you have acquired the skill" (*Contemporary* 85), and you can therefore be assessed as being a "good writer" regardless of the content of your discourse. In fact, like several of Isocrates' rivals, many contemporary instructors still seem to believe that if students are taught "the forms and principles [then] the contents will take care of themselves" (Hirsch 143). Such

assumptions often result in freshman composition becoming a "fragmented rhetoric of form without serious content" (Horner 2), something Isocrates highly discouraged. Although he admired eloquence highly and strove to make his own discourses pleasing to his audiences' ears, according to Isocrates, it was "foolish" to spend "more time on the style than on the subject matter" of a discourse (*To Philip* 94). He therefore would be disdainful of the attitude of many of today's teachers who "still seem to believe, whether they say it or not, that what students say matters less than how they say it, that learning to manipulate strategies and genres is more important than thinking well in language or discovering personal stances and values" (Knoblauch and Brannon 46); these same instructors often tend to think that it is pedagogically worthwhile to ask students to engage in "a reiteration of dead issues solely for the purpose of demonstrating mastery of formal or technical constraints" (Knoblauch and Brannon 46). Isocrates knew that ideas and their expression are intricately tied together, and he would therefore never condone separating the assessment of the quality of a student's ideas from the way in which they are articulated. As he said, "the power to speak well is taken as the surest index of a sound understanding" (*Nicocles* 7). By "speaking well," he meant speaking in an insightful (and, whenever possible, delightful) manner that was fitting for the occasion and took into account the consequences that would result from the speech's public distribution, which is one reason our students ought to be given the chance to receive public responses to their writing as well as responses from their teachers and classmates.

As we have seen, one reason Isocrates was critical of the technical rhetoric taught by his contemporaries was because he felt that it failed to take into consideration the quality or moral responsibility of the rhetor's arguments and that the graduates of such courses were "incapable either of saying anything pertinent or of giving any counsel regarding the present" (*Against* 7-8). I am critical of the limited conception of persuasive

writing currently being taught by many of my contemporaries for the same reasons. Here I agree with Gage's observation that

> if the terms of a writing assignment are strictly formal, as in the traditional "five-paragraph theme" or the equally traditional term paper which must have citations from x number of sources, then it is clear that such an assignment can be fulfilled with good or bad ideas indiscriminately. And, if students have been taught to view success on such assignments as fulfillment of the technical requirements, however those may be defined, then it will no doubt occur to them that the best way to ensure success is to keep the ideas as simple and meaningless as possible. If successful writing is defined as technical skills only, then students may be learning an unspoken lesson that is unintended by the pedagogy, namely, that ideas do not matter. (15)

For Isocrates, however, it was precisely the ideas that mattered the most, rather than the "facility in oratory," which is why he assessed a successful rhetorical performance as one that "not merely make[s] an oratorical display" but "accomplish[es] something as well" (*Panegyricus* 17). I would argue that the best, and perhaps only, way to see if our students' writing can accomplish something is to put it into public circulation.

Returning to an Isocratean emphasis on the development of the subject matter and the rhetor's impetus for accomplishing something with her composition would not only encourage us to teach our students to consider carefully the social contexts out of which they are generating their discourses, but would also help our students recognize "that the discourses in which we take part are rule- and convention-bound, and that we are required to examine those rules and conventions to see what (and who) is included, what (and who) is excluded" (Bernard-Donals 438). I agree with Gage that it is time to stop subjecting students to "prescriptions and proscriptions deriving from principles they do not understand and in jargon they do not comprehend" (16). Such rigorously prescriptive

instruction leads students to believe that "grammar is a mystery, known only to English teachers, and that their own failure to learn every nuance of grammar is going to get them into trouble as writers" so that when they write "they think about having to follow the rules, and in consequence their attention is diverted from *what they are trying to say*" (Gage 16, emphasis added). Instead, by presenting writing not just as a school assignment to be submitted to teachers who will read it mainly in order to mark up the logical and factual mistakes and the failures to comply with the formal and generic rules, but as a means of genuine inquiry, of seeking out and developing answers, and of arriving at decisions with interested others, as I argued earlier, students should begin to see that discursive rules and norms are continually being renegotiated and established based on each discursive endeavor and situation and they will be "moved to change their habits when they notice inadequate choices negatively affecting readers' perceptions of what they are trying to say" (Knoblauch and Brannon 15), rather than when they see the large quantities of red ink that their teacher has "bled" all over the pages of their essays.

Furthermore, students may also realize that as participants in various discourse communities they will have a chance to change the rules of propriety and help determine what gets read and what gets rejected. As McComiskey declares, when "writers invent arguments out of the values and identities they have learned through their engagement with various institutions, and they adapt their prose to the perceived needs of an audience whom they invent and invoke in social and discursive relation to themselves [. . .] writing is situated beyond the levels of correctness and propriety" (*Teaching* 134). Unlike the typical classroom in which the teacher is the only audience that really matters (since he or she is the only one who ends up reading and responding to the "final" draft) and who functions primarily as a corrector whose main objective is to mark stylistic, logical, and grammatical errors, the (re)new(ed) Isocratean classroom that I am proposing would not only allow, but actually *require* students to participate in genuine social and political acts of writing that engage them in meaningful discourse with real audiences, and they would

be assessed not on their ability to turn every writing task into an "academic essay" that follows the rules of "Standard Written English" and presents in logical, clear, and concise order the ideas of other writers and thinkers, but on their ability to assess and adapt to various discursive situations and to take responsibility for and critically interpret the results of putting their discursive performances into the public domain (see Appendix B). Here I concur with Crowley's position that

> the prescriptiveness of traditional writing pedagogy simply overlooks the influence of context on readers' receptions of texts, assuming that the Perfect Text can be equally well received by all readers, and occulting the reality that some readers will never be ready to receive some texts. The proof of any practice, then, lies not in the perfection of its result but in the appropriateness for those who must use it. ("Plea" 332)

She anticipates the predictable question, "How can the student know when the practice has been mastered?" by explaining, "her audience, finally, the consumers of her product, are the best (and only) valid judges of her mastery" (331). Neel also declares that in his classes "truth forever resides in the effectiveness of the discourse on the intended audience" (*Aristotle* 202).

Does this mean that I am suggesting that only those students who achieve successful discursive performances and accurately predict the effects of their discourses on their intended audiences will receive high marks? Certainly not. Instead, students will first be asked to complete self-assessments of their decision-making processes as they went about composing their discourse and choosing its medium of distribution,[23] then they will be asked to follow-up and record and respond to several of the responses they receive from their initial peer audiences and later from the public recipients of their discourse (see Appendix B). Finally, the instructor, in his or her role as an experienced reader and writer, will analyze the student's discourse as a *rhetorical performance* and examine those aspects of the student's writing that enhanced or inhibited its chances of

garnering an audience's attention and invoking an active response—including its grammar and mechanics, its style and arrangement—that is, its ability "to connect smoothly what follows with what goes before, and to make all parts consonant with one another"(*Antidosis* 11), its development of ideas, its supporting evidence and appeals, its creativity and inventiveness, and its ability to "find words to match [its] theme" (*Panegyricu*s 14) and to "speak as no one else could" (*Panegyricus* 10).

When instructors respond to student writing in this way, "with questions, approval, empathy, and suggestions—rather than commands, corrections, hostility, and grades," they can "demonstrate to students that not all writing—nor by extension all student ideas—needs to be submitted for instructor approval, revision, or correction" (Fulwiler 184). The most important lesson they learn, however, is that they "must take responsibility for and make choices about their own ideas, writing, and learning" (Fulwiler 184). In addition, they will be less willing and less able to "get away with" writing "safe" essays in which they promote a position in a formally correct, but politically and socially meaningless, vacuum. In such an environment, I would suggest that students will recover their "needs and desires to create significant pieces of writing," needs and desires that have been largely forgotten in classes that focus on the "'polished' surface of language" and that consequently create "a national course in silence" (S. Miller, *Textual* 55). Instead, (re)new(ed) Isocratean classrooms would become noisy courses in active debate and constant reevaluation and *kairotic* resolution of issues in which students would be vying to have their voices heard and responded to among the cacophony of other voices trying to attract an audience's attention.

Finally, partially as a concession to the current insistence on and, indeed, necessity for training students in "academic discourse" and partially as another important element in teaching students to take responsibility for their discourse production and its results, as I mentioned earlier, each major assignment will include a requirement to write a critical reflective essay that examines the process of composing, researching, and

distributing each practical discursive performance. This critical essay would be designed to help students articulate their expectations and their strategies and to think ahead to their next practical assignment. It would mimic the traditional "academic essay" in some ways because it would be composed for distribution to a limited audience (the members of the class and the instructor) and the writers would be expected to organize their argument in a thesis-driven manner and to write within the conventions of the dominant discourse of "Standard Written English." In order to reap the full benefits of such a course and to firmly inculcate the habit of active civic participation, however, this course would have to last longer than one or two semesters and it would have to revise significantly the current universally required freshman composition course housed primarily in departments of English.[24]

Beyond First-Year Writing: Departments of Rhetoric and Civic Discourse

As we have seen, back in the late-nineteenth century, writing instruction "was denied disciplinary status, compartmentalized into freshman composition, and housed in English departments, where it competed (unsuccessfully) with the new professional discipline of literary study" (Russell, *Writing* 7). The main reason the freshman composition course was an unsuccessful competitor, I would argue once again, was because it lost its connection with the rich history of rhetorical instruction in civic discourse that began with Isocrates. Instead, it was segregated into "'remedial' courses where students [were] presumed to be preparing for any writing situation in general and none in particular" (Russell, "Activity" 72). As I attempted to demonstrate in the first chapter, in our current situation, most first-year composition courses in departments of English are still limited by this inauspicious beginning. One unfortunate result of this continued trivialization of composition instruction is that the effectiveness of composition programs is still "judged largely by the level of correctness and propriety its students achieve in relation to the body of their writing" (S. Miller, *Textual* 167). Furthermore, in

complete contradiction to an Isocratean program of rhetoric and civic discourse, as we saw in Bergann's anecdotal description earlier, "the 'social usefulness' of a composition program depends in large measure on a director's ability to leave the uses of writing undefined or tied only to generic processes, forms, and formats that are not openly implicated in social or political conflicts" (S. Miller, *Textual* 167).

The social and political implications of writing may be largely lacking in these courses found within departments of English due to the fact that "the English teacher who feels comfortable only with belletristic texts is not likely to be a contented or even an effective teacher of the kind of reading and writing our students will have to deal with as citizens of the world" (Corbett, "A History" 180). For these reasons and others, I agree with Russell that "simply reforming freshman English (again) will not adequately address the deeper issues" (*Writing* 8) resulting from the lack of instruction in political rhetoric and civic discourse in our current writing programs in American colleges and universities. I also agree with Maureen Goggin that "to continue to equate our identity and our work solely with first-year composition as it is presently configured keeps us restricted and unfulfilled. By contrast, under the rhetoricians' concept, it is possible to imagine a rhetorical discipline and a set of courses in a broad range of literate practices. Rhetoric then may provide the sledgehammer that will enable us to reconfigure the discipline" (44).[25] As I have tried to demonstrate throughout this dissertation, one of the best examples we have of how to wield that sledgehammer effectively and how to design an extended course of study in rhetoric and civic discourse is provided by Isocrates.

As Isocrates' precedent shows us, "teachers ought to articulate the kinds of activities they want their students to perform outside the classroom, and they should design pedagogical techniques that develop skills in their students consistent with these future activities" (McComiskey, *Teaching* 113), if for no other reason than "as is the education of our youth so from generation to generation will be the fortune of the state" (*Antidosis* 174). Unlike Isocrates' program of both training for and actually engaging in

consequential, public rhetorical performances, our first-year writing courses as they are currently configured are "neither sufficiently situated in meaningful and complex activities that provide the real challenges of writing nor sufficiently engaging to evoke the deep commitment and creativity from which serious writing flows" (Bazerman 251-252). As Isocrates argued, teachers should not apply "the analogy of an art with hard and fast rules to a creative process" (*Against* 12). According to him, writing and rhetorical literacy (which includes reading, criticizing, and performing) should be at the center of the curriculum because it is essential for developing one's intellect and the ability to debate and decide, skills that serve students not only in their lives as everyday public citizens, but in their academic and professional development as well.

Although writing is still often regarded as a "generalizable elementary, mechanical skill" that can "be relegated to the margins of a course, a curriculum, and institution" (Russell, *Writing* 5), once the case is made for placing students' responsibility for negotiating with others and for making decisions and acting justly in the world (abilities without which their technical skills alone could not support them) at the center of education, and once writing is seen by instructors and students as a way of making ideas matter and changing "anything which is not as it should be" (*Evagoras* 7), then the American undergraduate curriculum will be able to fulfill the commitment to language study and citizenship desired by most people.[26] This is why, as did Isocrates, we should provide our students with progressively more challenging courses in rhetoric and civic discourse *throughout* their undergraduate careers.

One of the major disadvantages of the nineteenth-century legacy of reducing required writing instruction to freshman composition is "that the 'composition' of this two-sided entity is elementary, insofar as it is always thought of as *freshman* 'work,' not the study of writing throughout college" (S. Miller, *Textual* 53). Such a reduction of college writing to "freshman work"—especially when some students receive "exemptions" from this work—contributes to the unfortunate attitude of students that the

first-year writing course is an elementary, "service" course that can be gotten out of the way in the first year of study and never need be returned to again. Isocrates, however, recognized the value of practice, experience, and expert guidance provided by a more lengthy course for *everyone*, no matter how "naturally" talented. As he said, "we know that men who are less generously endowed by nature but excel in experience and practice, not only improve upon themselves, but surpass others who, though highly gifted, have been too negligent of their talents" (*Antidosis* 191). Unlike the "work" done in first-year writing courses, the four year course in rhetoric and civic discourse that I am proposing would require students to manipulate language in progressively more sophisticated ways throughout their schooling in order to acquire the ability to participate fully in the uses of discursive production and analysis in a democratic society.

Isocrates not only knew that students usually could gain an objective understanding of the basic principles of discourse production fairly quickly through the constant production and distribution of their own texts and the analysis of the texts that served as examples and source materials for their own texts, but he also realized that "progress toward excellence is a function of increasing experience more than objective understanding of principles" (Knoblauch and Brannon 4). The value of extended formal training, according to Isocrates, was that it makes students "more skillful and more resourceful in discovering the possibilities of a subject; for it teaches them to take from a readier source the topics which they otherwise hit upon in haphazard fashion," and it is also capable of leading students on "to self-improvement and to a greater degree of intelligence on many subjects" (*Against* 15). Isocrates likened his training of students' minds to a physical trainer's exercising of the body, saying that by "watching over [their pupils] and training them in this manner, both the teachers of gymnastic and the teachers of discourse are able to advance their pupils to a point where they are better men and where they are stronger in their thinking or in the use of their bodies" (*Antidosis* 185).

Knoblauch and Brannon use a similar analogy when they declare that

> writers develop their abilities to make more satisfying or "creative" relationships among ideas through extended use of those abilities, somewhat as muscles develop through use. Teachers cannot provide students with "skills" of thinking or "skills" of forming assertions and connecting them as discourse. But they can create incentive and contexts for thinking and writing, so that the process of developing and strengthening composing ability may proceed. They can also offer some important development support, especially by responding to students' writing in ways that will enable the writers to recognize intellectual or organizational insufficiency as well as opportunities for further thought and alternative means of expression. Since composing isn't a technology, it doesn't develop in a mechanically ordered way. Students need to do it—in the presence of discerning readers who are comfortable amidst the untidy creative immediacy of writers at work. (93)

Isocrates saw himself as that discerning reader, and that is the role I suggest that teachers of a (re)new(ed) Isocratean rhetoric take on as well (see Appendix B).

Ideally, the course in rhetoric and public discourse could be taught to the same students by the same teacher throughout the four years, thus enabling contemporary teachers to take on the mentoring and modeling roles Isocrates provided for his students in addition to their role as expert readers and writers.[27] I want to clarify that this course would not be a course in writing for the disciplines. Clearly, teachers of the (re)new(ed) Isocratean rhetoric could not be expected to be experts in the writing standards of all the disciplines. One solution might be to suggest that "the best place to offer experience in professional genres may not be the writing class at all—where a professional constraint must be taught in the absence of the modes of thought and the kinds of problems that animate discourse in a given field" (Langer 72)—but rather that discipline-specific

writing should be taught in courses in those fields.[28] However, the problem with this suggestion is that "the specific types of claims and warrants that [are] construed as effective discourse in particular [disciplinary] contexts" are "rarely articulated by the teachers involved, though there may be an intuitive recognition that such differences exist" (Langer 72). On the other hand, it would be possible for instructors of rhetoric and civic discourse to teach student writers in the final two years of their undergraduate education how to analyze model discourses, assess discipline-specific genres, and determine appropriate discourse conventions for various professional audiences. They could, that is, help students "do the rhetorical analysis that identifies the thinking strategies that seem most important for a particular type of assignment" (Odell 89) regardless of how much they (the writing instructors) know about the discipline-specific contents of the students' assignments.

Of course, while there might always be the danger, in such cases, of the writing instructors being expected to act primarily as "grammar cops," ideally the rhetoric and composition teachers would be viewed by their colleagues and students as having "valuable knowledge—about writing processes, language, rhetoric, critical inquiry, and pedagogy" (Zawacki and Williams 118, 126) that they could share with their students and with their fellow faculty members, and they could change the perception that writing is a skill that can be learned once and for all, rather than a sophisticated way of applying rhetorical strategies, analysis, choices, and motives across many discursive situations. In addition, the students would be encouraged by their writing teachers to distribute their writing to professional audiences or to consider using some of their disciplinary insights to persuade and inform "popular" or "public" audiences. This would allow the students' writing to be assessed for its effectiveness among real and diverse audiences, as well as for meeting the subject-matter experts' expectations that the students demonstrate understanding of the course content and the ability to articulate what they have learned.

If we agree to require students to enroll in at least one course in rhetoric and civic discourse (preferably with the same teacher) each year of their undergraduate education, we can move the practice of the writing teacher from corrector to facilitator, and we can begin teaching like Isocrates, who saw the need to place rhetoric and writing at the center of the curriculum because they are not only the study of how to make *kairotic* choices in an unstable world, but are the lifeblood of a democracy because they enable students to form their characters and become active and engaged public citizens. By placing public discourse and civic participation back at the center of every undergraduate's education in this way, we can both redeem writing instruction from its lowly status in the academy *and* habituate our students to applying their minds and their discursive performances to occasions and consequences that matter, not just for themselves, but for everyone.

Conclusion

Following Isocrates' Lead: Embracing New Communication Technologies

As technology revalidates the spoken word and the power of the individual speaker, we may be entering a new age of rhetoric where Isocrates still has something to say of value.
> —Terry Perkins, "Isocrates and Plato"

Searching out and then justifying new uses for writing was one of Isocrates' projects. Isocrates also attempted to expand on perceived uses for writing.
> —Susan Miller, *Rescuing the Subject*

Isocrates engaged in writing not simply to compensate for his bodily weakness or lack of courage; he pursued writing with a dual goal of shifting the focus of contemporary rhetorical-political practices from their traditional sites and crafting his own distinct civic identity.
> —Ekaterina Haskins, "Orality, Literacy"

We have now entered the twenty-first century, and while we may congratulate ourselves for having "returned from the current-traditional compression of rhetoric to an expansive sense of its scope and a more fully inclusive and international appreciation for the range of backgrounds, needs, and desires that inform the teaching of reading and writing," I think we still need to question with William Covino "whether a rich conception of rhetorical pedagogy can be sustained in academic and institutional contexts that continue to value formulaic models of writing and learning" (49). What I have tried to suggest throughout this dissertation is that a rich conception of rhetoric can be sustained in the academy if we make some basic institutional changes, specifically moving first-year writing classes out of departments of English and instituting a four-year program in Isocratean communal civic rhetoric that would be mandatory for all undergraduates. This sustained program could make students better writers by requiring them to conceive writing not "as an exercise one must do to produce a paper, but [as] an indispensable part

of solving a problem or addressing a concern" (LeFevre 130) and by asking them to maintain a constant focus on how, what, where, why and to whom they are writing. In addition, this (re)new(ed) Isocratean rhetorical education would also habituate our students to behaving as active and engaged public citizens by insisting that they not just critique others' writing but that they "see themselves as linked in history to a tradition of rhetoric and persuasive oratory, as designers of texts rather than passive victims of rules" (Davidson 127), and that they produce and distribute their writing in public forums and accept responsibility for the outcomes of their discursive performances.

I agree with James Slevin that the project of composition is "intrinsically connected to the project of a democratized university" (6). I also contend, with Hobbs and Berlin, that "writing and reading in the English class in the twenty-first century should aim at no less than to enable us to understand the central processes informing culture, the self and their relationship" (287). And, as does Rice, I believe that an education based on writing "is a good place to stage debates, embrace balance, openness, and genuine diversity, and in doing so prepare citizens for the lively intellectual culture we will need if we are to perpetuate and extend American democracy" (147). Finally, along with Jarratt, I "envision a composition course in which students argue about the ethical implications of discourse on a wide range of subjects and, in so doing, come to identify their personal interests with others, understand those interests as implicated in a larger social setting, and advance them in a public voice" ("Case" 121). What I have been claiming throughout this dissertation is that one way such hopeful visions might be achieved is by rereading Isocrates' texts and renewing his pedagogical methods in the twenty-first century writing classroom.

As I have attempted to demonstrate, designing courses based on Isocrates' model would enable our students to participate in actual social and political acts of writing that would allow them to engage in meaningful discursive performances with real audiences who have the capacity to respond and bring about changes in the various provisional

communities to which they belong. As we have seen, Isocrates required his students to take their rhetorical training directly into the public sphere, so should we. As I have argued, rather than focusing exclusively on the conventions of "academic discourse" and prior to asking students to produce writing in discipline-specific genres, more instructors should have their students submit work to periodicals, legislators, and civic groups. In the technological world of the twenty-first century, a world in which most college students have access to email, and in which most media outlets, businesses, and legislative offices accept electronically submitted correspondence, this is more viable, affordable, and practicable than ever before. Here I agree with Welch's assertion that "the electronic rhetoric of the computer offers us the opportunity to increase student and citizen language action" (*Electric* 23). In other words, as Howard Rheingold says, "the economy of effort that computers provide makes it possible to mobilize opinion" (257). In the electronic environment, explains David Downing, there is "much greater potential [. . .] to create the kind of interactive social and political context for the distribution and production of knowledge than in a print medium still wedded to traditional notions of individual scholarship, authorship, and hierarchical publication practices" (186). Therefore, in an internetworked classroom, students "can become and *not just pretend to become*, active professionals and citizens" (Porter 5, emphasis added). While we need to consider the danger that there is a greater likelihood that "new technologies will reflect existing power relations [rather] than overturn them, and it is not at all clear that changes in cultural formations effect political changes" (A. Kennedy, 31), like Isocrates, who capitalized on the potential of the written word, we cannot afford to overlook the promising pedagogical and practical social value of this expanding technology.

Although by mid-fourth century BCE "writing had taken firm roots in the soil of an oral culture, [. . .] it was still regarded as an innovation and, as such, with suspicion. Moreover, the primacy of the spoken word was asserted again and again by such figures as Alcidamas, Plato, and Aristotle" (J. Poulakos, "Early" 320). Like these other ancient

figures, Isocrates tended to believe that "when men essay to give advice, it is far preferable that they should come in person rather than send a letter, [. . .] because it is easier to discuss the same matters face to face than to give their views by letter" (*To Dionysius* 2). He also agreed with his contemporaries (especially Plato) that at that time in history most people gave "greater credence to the spoken rather than to the written word" because "in personal converse, if anything that is said is either not understood or not believed, the one who is presenting the arguments, being present, can come to the rescue in either case; but when written missives are used and any such misconception arises, there is no one to correct it, for since the writer is not at hand, the defender is lacking" (*To Dionysius* 2-3).[1]

However, while he acknowledged the numerous disadvantages of writing,[2] he also quickly noticed and seized upon the *kairotic* possibilities offered by the suspiciously regarded technology for both preserving and publishing one's views in an increasingly diverse and geographically-scattered culture. For example, he described an education in letters as "a science which has so much power that those who understand and use it become apprized not only of the things which have been accomplished in their own time but also of the things which have come to pass in any age whatsoever" (*Panathenaicus* 209). Such knowledge was gaining importance in the international and cosmopolitan culture of fourth-century Athens and has become indispensable in our current global cultural climate.[3] We also share with Isocrates "the paradox of expanding communication technology and the decline of the public sphere" (Goodnight 260). However, in this time when citizen subjects are being presented with more and more information, most "do not know how to make sense it. What is missing for many," declares Mary Walshok, is the capacity to evaluate and *use* information for positive social, civic, and economic purposes. This requires transforming information into ideas and analysis useful to *making judgments*" (76, emphasis added). The ability to transform

information and use it to make judgments is exactly what a (re)new(ed) Isocratean

rhetoric offers us.

As did Isocrates, we should embrace the intellectual and rhetorical potential of

new technologies and their ability to reach wider audiences. We should take advantage

of the idea that the electronic environment creates "a special climate in which the

academic and civic cultures communicate more continuously and more creatively with

each other" (Boyer, qtd. in Plater 145). In our postmodern desire to flatten hierarchies,

we should delight in the fact that the World Wide Web to creates "layers of information

that can be approached through multiple channels, each designed to accommodate and

respond to the public's interest instead of the campus's traditional hierarchy and

disciplinary organization," and thereby it "opens the way for increased interaction and

engagement [in a] discourse for a shared purpose without hierarchy or closure" (Plater

146). Such an environment certainly holds the potential for offering more suitable ways

to "link" phrases in an effort to work towards a more just society.[4] At the same time, like

Isocrates, we should not disregard or neglect previous modes of discourse production and

distribution in our teaching, particularly those to which a greater and more varied

audience has access.

As Garret warns us, although "[i]n some ways cutting-edge communication

technologies level power differentials (as in anonymous discussion groups), allow greater

freedom of expression (set up your own Web page!), and empower citizens and

researchers by making immense amounts of information readily available," it is also

important "to contextualize these new communication phenomena, both geographically

and socioeconomically, and to consider the power relations they create and reinforce"

(46-47). In other words, these technologies, like the oral and written rhetoric that

preceded them, are implicated in the constant struggle for power that is inherent in all

human civilizations and have the potential to privilege the wealthy and the educated

members of society and to disenfranchise the less-educated and the poor. While we

certainly need to remain aware of the differentials of access,[5] when possible, we should not pass up the opportunity to expose our students to the potential public discursive power of these technologies.

As in ancient Athens, current new communication technologies "are regarded for the most part as an unpleasant, unrewarding task" by many academics and intellectuals and thus are often uncritically "thrown into the already-there-and-already-exploited writing programs" (Welch, "Technology" 163) in American colleges and universities. However, rather than regarding the new media and technologies of discourse production and distribution as "necessary evils" or as yet another way to exploit first-year composition as a "service course" (this time in technological or computer literacy), despite the very real differences in access that our students may have, we should continue to explore and incorporate these new discourse technologies into our writing instruction—especially text-based electronic ones such as hypertext, computerized bulletin board systems (BBS), the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW), markup languages, Internet relay chat (IRC), Multiuser Dungeons (MUDs), and Multiuser Dungeons Object-Oriented (MOOs). As did Isocrates, we may find that these technologies will invite us to think about our thinking and our discourse production, distribution, and reception in new ways and that they facilitate important insights about how we express ourselves and form our opinions,[6] particularly as members of a broader community outside the classroom walls or the boundaries of the academy.

Just as Isocrates embraced the new technology of writing because of its ability to reach a greater population beyond the range of any one speaker's voice and because it allowed for new forms of abstract and complex thinking, we should embrace the inherent wide-ranging power of electronic communication and distribution technologies. As we have seen, Isocrates felt that the optimum way for a person to develop a set of criteria with which to make an informed judgment was by actively engaging in political processes and thus gathering experience as a decision-making member of various

provisional communities. In our own time, "the progressive separation of rhetorical audiences from advocates has largely eliminated the audience as the efficient cause of rhetoric—those who judge. In its place, we often find a pre-packaged spectacle, which, when ingested by an apathetic public, creates the illusion of moral involvement in public decision-making" (Frentz 291). However, part of the political significance of computer-mediated communication, according to Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) activist Rheingold, lies in its potential capacity to "revitalize citizen-based democracy" and to "help revitalize the public sphere" (xxix-xxx).[7] Welch echoes this sentiment. "The polis of our time," she proclaims, "exists on the screens of televisions and computers" (*Electric* 195).[8] Rheingold asserts that "the technology that makes virtual communities possible has the potential to bring enormous leverage to ordinary citizens at relatively little cost" (xix) because in computer-mediated communication, "everyone is on stage, everyone is in the audience, everyone is a critic" (187), every student can simultaneously be author, publisher, and distributor. Furthermore, "savvy users of the internet [have] access to a mass of opinion whose ideological range [is] matched by its geopolitical reach" (Giroux 66). In addition, because cyberspace environments tend to be compatible with social and political beliefs in collectivity and participation, they meet our need "to pursue the rhetorical resources available to us for building public life" (Klumpp 78) and offer us a chance to reconnect civic life with the academic agenda.

Indeed, one of the most attractive features of an internetworked classroom is that writing *can* be taught "in live public forums" where "ethical and political dissonances [. . .] get played out" (Porter 6). Even though most of us still hold onto the ancient notion of the public sphere as a physical space so that "when we think about 'public discourse,' the public appears as a pre-existing forum where citizens make decisions face to face," and even though this imagined public space "is not available, at least not in the form we have imagined it" (Wells 326), it is my hope, as Rheingold conjectures, that cyberspace "is one of the informal public places where people can rebuild the aspects of community

that were lost when the malt shop became a mall" (10). It does not matter that this new imagined public sphere is not located in any fixed geographical space because, as Farrell suggests, "a rhetorical forum is any encounter setting sufficiently durable to serve as a recurring 'gathering place' for discourse" (88-89). Consequently, "[m]uch more important than a specific location in geographic space is that a forum have some durability and continuity over time. It needs to be accessible to those who wish to participate, recurrently so. And it needs the capacity for the projection and retrieval of messages. This creates a sense of *reflective* participation" (Farrell 89-90, emphasis added).[9]

So, as we look for rhetorical forums in which our students can participate, "it makes sense to place [them] into the Net. There we can ask them to write in a space where anyone and everyone can read their words, and students can exchange ideas in a more real world setting, with people situated in the real world" (Myers-Breslin 161-162). However, we and our students also need to recognize that internetworked writing by itself "does not constitute community, collaboration, or even conversation. Writing out thoughts and placing these ideas into a space is brainstorming. To converse, students must read what others write and respond directly, not just place ideas into a space" (Myers-Breslin 162). Furthermore, technological powers of discourse production and distribution, no less importantly than their predecessors, "must be used intelligently and deliberately by an informed population" (Rheingold xix) if they are to result in meaningful actions. James Porter cautions those who are eager to harness the potentials of electronic publishing that wide scale availability may "lead to an explosion of bad information, more clutter, and more noise rather than useful information—that is, we might have a more vocal citizenry, but not necessarily a wiser or better informed one" (12).

A writing classroom modeled on Isocrates would be the ideal place for students to learn how to use such power "intelligently and deliberately" since Isocrates taught that

the ability to speak and write well is closely linked with the ability to think intelligently and that only certain voices (usually those that are well-informed about the issues and the discursive conventions of the audience) will be heard and acted upon amid the babble of public debate. As I illustrate in Appendix A, upon completing a computer-assisted course in (re)new(ed) Isocratean civic discourse, students will have been introduced to several readily accessible means of actively and critically participating in their communities, the nation, and even McLuhan's "global village." In addition, as I explained in the last chapter, our students will come to realize that those who fail to adhere to an audience's standards of "correctness" or who fail to use the canons of style and arrangement in creative and memorable ways consistent with the media of delivery[10] may lose an opportunity to influence public opinions. In other words, students will see that in any rhetorical forum "two very different sorts of loci may always intersect"; first, "the cumulative weight of customary practice: convention, commonplace and *communis sensus* associated with the forum's own history; and second, the inevitably uncertain fact of otherness" (Farrell 89). That is, while "a rhetorical forum provides a potential normative horizon" it also "provides a space for multiple expressed positions to encounter one another. And in its most developed condition, the forum may also provide precedents and modalities for granting a hearing to positions, as well as sorting among their agendas and constituencies" (Farrell 89).

Given the chance to participate in public rhetorical spaces, electronic or otherwise, our students will encounter, consider, and learn to respect new and different points of view, to collaborate with numerous other participants, in the classroom and out, and to articulate their thoughts in writing so that they can convince various audiences that their ideas are worthy of consideration and subsequent action. This Isocratean classroom of the twenty-first century will be both student-centered and outwardly-focused. Its students will learn to use writing to think in complex ways, to analyze and critique existing discourses, to contextualize and support their opinions, to recognize networks of

interpretation, and to construct contingent truths in an uncertain world. What more can we hope for?

Endnotes

Preface

[1] I agree with Faigley that "[w]hile historical studies have made us aware of how the teaching of rhetoric has shifted in scope and purpose, they should also remind us that we cannot go back to a golden age of rhetoric. The diversity of contemporary American culture, the speed of cultural change, and the multiplicity of the mass media demand that we find new ways of studying the possibilities for rhetoric" (71). Finding these new ways is precisely what this dissertation intends to accomplish.

[2] For more on the taxonomy of the various categories of historians of rhetoric, see Crowley's "Let Me," McComiskey's *Gorgias*, and Schiappa's *Protagoras*.

[3] Throughout this dissertation, for consistency's sake I quote from the Loeb Classical Library editions of translators Norlin and Van Hook unless otherwise noted. I also wish to mention here that the relative lack of modern English translations of Isocrates' texts when compared to his contemporaries Plato and Aristotle attests to his general dismissal as a minor rhetorical figure, a position from which I hope to recover him.

Introduction

[1] According to Ballif, the danger of defining rhetoric "as political, civic discourse, as service to the polis" is that such a definition leads rhetoric to be understood "ultimately as a service to metaphysics" (9).

[2] Here I agree with Foucault, who argues, "to speak is to do something" (*Archaeology* 209).

[3] While I understand that the terms "public" and "community" are problematic because they have a history of implying exclusion and suppressing or eliding differences (and they were certainly exclusive in Isocrates' time), I would argue with Kasteley that "[c]ommunity can be conceived of as a pluralized, temporal, provisional form of sharing. Community in this sense marks a public space in which people feel secure enough that they are willing to put in refutative play their identities as a way of perceiving and taking responsibility for their own ideological constitution. The value of community lies in its providing a shared situation or activity in which identity can be risked and possibly reconstituted; such a community must seek and value difference as a condition for its functioning as a community" (241).

[4] Of course, I recognize that I, too, could be accused of "replac[ing] an official institution by another institution that fulfills the same function—better and differently" and that I am thereby in danger of "already being absorbed by the dominant structure" (Foucault, *Language* 232), much as I am arguing that previous revisionary pedagogies have been, but nonetheless, I will go forward with my project.

[5] Although I admittedly have limited experience in this area, having taught composition at only one institution, I feel confident making this assertion based on evidence gathered by other scholars such as Crowley, who reports that "recent studies of college writing programs suggest that CTR [current-traditional-rhetoric] is alive and well. At least half of such programs in the country—perhaps more—follow its pedagogy" (*Methodical* 139), Herzberg, who states that "[s]tudies of composition textbooks continue to find an overwhelming emphasis on correctness" ("Composition" 110), and Faigley, who proclaims that "many in the public and in the academy think that first-year writing courses should be either about great literature or matters of grammar and mechanical correctness" (77). *Cf.* McComiskey, *Gorgias* 68, Lowe 17, Couture 30, Welch, *Electric* 146, and S. Miller, "Composition" 20.

[6] According to Daniel Fogarty, who coined the term in *Roots for a New Rhetoric* (1959), "current-traditional rhetoric emphasizes grammar, syntax, mechanics, and spelling" (Babin and Harrison 148). Richard Young is credited with popularizing the term "current-traditional" in his 1978 essay "Paradigms and Problems: Needed Research in Rhetorical Invention" (Halloran 245). For the "legacies" of current-traditional rhetoric, see Winterowd's "Where We Are" (31). I also want to acknowledge the point made by Pullman that "in a sense, the reified expression current-traditional rhetoric does little more than create a daemon for the sake of expelling it" (23). I admit that in on more than one occasion I am strategically setting up the much disparaged practice of CTR as my "straw man."

[7] According to Welch, "Adequate formal training in writing instruction at the college level does not yet exist in enough places. The diminished status and the undertraining of part-time writing instructors continue to dominate the teaching of writing at many places" (*Contemporary* 80); this leaves the teaching of writing to be carried out by "large groups of apprentice teachers, part-time teachers, or nontenure-track professors" (81).

[8] I realize that Berlin's categories have come under fire recently as being too reductive. In fact, although I agree with Crowley that "Berlin's schema lumps together some pretty inhospitable bedmates" ("Let Me" 5), his categories are still generally accepted and recognized by compositionists as useful categorical distinctions and their staying power is made evident by their appearance in such recent anthologies as Moran and Ballif's *Twentieth-Century Rhetorics and Rhetoricians*, published in 2000, and Tate, Rupiper, and Schick's *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, published in 2001.

[9] *Cf.* Crowley, *Composition* 185 and Faigley 61. "Johnny's" primary offenses were in the areas of spelling, vocabulary, syntax, and organization.

[10] *Cf.* S. Miller, *Textual* 10 and Welch, *Electric* 146 and 150-157.

[11] *Cf.* LeFevre and Berlin, "Rhetoric," for example.

[12] According to Bizzell, "most college writing programs now have the same official goal: to equip students for performing the writing tasks their college education demands, and the writing tasks they will encounter after college" (*Academic Discourse* 129).

[13] *Cf.* Crowley, *Composition in the University* and Davis, *Breaking Up [At] Totality*. The call for the abolition of the composition course is not new, however. See, for example, Greenbaum's "The Tradition of Complaint" and Connors's "The Abolition Debate in Composition."

[14] It is too easy to make excuses when one defines oneself in such ways. For example, such understandings of oneself as a professional or someone who is just following orders can lead quite readily to such statements as "I don't decide where to drop the bombs, I just manufacture them," or "I just drop them where I'm told to drop them." What is lacking in such explanations is a sense of social responsibility for others and for the judgments and decisions one has, in fact, made by defining oneself as a bomb-manufacturer or a military pilot, or even as one who lets others make decisions for him. *Cf.* Frentz 291 and Brown 53.

[15] Even though Corbett's textbook did much to contribute to the "revival" of ancient rhetorics during the 1960s and 1970s, unfortunately, during that time, as Crowley points out, "ancient rhetorics were never a serious competitor to current-traditionalism" ("Current-Traditional" 72).

[16] The significant increase in various calls for revised freshman writing curricula can be attributed in large part to the rise of rhetoric and composition as a discipline. According to North, "We can [. . .] date the birth of modern Composition, capital C, to 1963" (15), the year Albert Kitzhaber challenged the members of the Conference on College Composition and Communication to exert "authority over knowledge about composition" (15). Berlin, on the other hand, maintains that "rhetoric underwent a renaissance after World War II that has reached full flower in the years since 1975" (*Rhetoric and Reality* 183).

[17] For more on these schools of rhetoric and their practitioners, see Moran and Ballif, *Twentieth-Century Rhetorics and Rhetoricians,* and Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* and "Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories," and Tate, Rupiper, and Schick, *Guide to Composition Pedagogies*.

[18] *Cf.* S. Miller, *Textual* 99.

[19] I recognize that this is a somewhat reductive dichotomy, and I agree with Berlin that "reading is itself an act of production, not simply a passive act of receiving a determinate text" ("Composition" 392).

[20] *Cf.* Dobrin 138-140.

[21] Although I have used the feminine pronoun here, Isocrates would not have included women in his conception of the public citizen or of those who could articulate their opinions in public forums. By choosing to use the feminine pronoun myself, I am not ignoring his sexism, but rather seeking to undermine and overturn it.

[22] Here I agree with Bazerman that "one of composition's continuing strengths, at times to a fault, has been its attention to the students. Often composition is the only course where students find any attention, the one course where they can start to reflect on who they are and how they can best participate in their new situation" (255).

[23] I concur with Haskins's definition of ethos as the "sense that a citizen is required to perform, in word and deed, to the satisfaction of a political community" (24).

[24] Bizzell points out that "students often complain that they have nothing to say, whereas 'real-world' writers almost never do, precisely because real-world writers are writing for discourse communities in which they know their work can matter, whereas students can see little purpose for their own attempts other than to get a grade" ("Cognition" 381).

[25] *Cf.* Porter xiv.

[26] As Foucault tells us, controlling discourse is "a question of determining the conditions under which it may be employed, of imposing a certain number of rules upon those individuals who employ it, thus denying access to everyone else" (*Language* 224). It is my hope that the course I am proposing would greatly reduce the number of discourses our students will be denied access to.

[27] For an extended explanation of these proposed practices, see Chapter 4 and Appendix B.

[28] *Cf.* Ohmann 297.

[29] *Cf.* S. Miller, *Rescuing* 161.

[30] We certainly cannot overlook the fact that any discursive performance is always already political and is necessarily contributing to the maintenance of some form of power over others which must be understood as injustice. "The importance of this insight," as Kasteley explains, "is the ongoing need to assume responsibility for our own involvement in and contribution to injustice. Injustice is not only what someone else has perpetrated; rather, it is a problem of taking appropriate responsibility for the way the world is. This makes one of our most important tasks that of self-indictment, or not exonerating ourselves from responsibility by citing our good intentions and actions but rather diligently looking for what we have not been able to see" (25).

[31] As Papillion remarks, "Isocrates is not foremost a philosopher or a politician, though he certainly should be a part of the history of both areas. He was first a teacher of public discourse" (151).

[32] I would like to clarify what I mean by pedagogy. Stenberg and Lee explain that "while pedagogy has traditionally been conflated with teaching, or used to signify the theory preceding and informing practice, more recent conceptions understand pedagogy to encompass both theories and practices at once" (328). I agree with Stenberg and Lee that pedagogy should be "concerned with how knowledge is produced through specific practices and processes, as well as the values and assumptions that inform those interactions" (328). Therefore, a pedagogue must openly acknowledge his or her role as both a theorist and a practitioner, and perform both as a social critic and a teacher—as Isocrates did.

[33] Marrou explains that "it is to Isocrates more than to any other person that the honour and responsibility belong of having inspired in our Western traditional education a predominantly literary tone" (79-80). Jaeger proclaims that "there is no doubt that since the Renaissance [Isocrates] has exercised a far greater influence on the educational methods of humanism than any other Greek or Roman teacher. Historically it is perfectly correct to describe him as the father of 'humanistic culture'" (3:46).

[34] It is worth noting that just as Isocrates is dismissed because he is an educator through-and-through, "the structure of the university, and certainly the structure of the research university English department, militates against the teaching of writing because the teaching of writing begins and ends in pedagogy" (Neel, "Degradation" 79).

[35] *Cf*. Corbett, G. Kennedy, Atwill, Neel.

[36] *Cf*. Crowley, Jarratt, McComiskey, J. Poulakos, Schiappa.

[37] Crowley also makes note of the fact that numerous scholars "seem comfortable with a historical disciplinary narrative that features Plato and Aristotle, Campbell and Whateley, Weaver and Perelman rather than Gorgias and Isocrates, Nietzsche and Marx, Cixous and Wittig" ("Let Me" 18).

[38] *Cf. Helen* 12.

[39] *Cf*. Kimball 197.

[40] *Cf*. Bloom qtd. in Schiappa, "Isocrates'" 36.

[41] Although the historians all agree that Isocrates opened his school first, they are not in complete agreement about when his school opened. According to Jebb, it was "about the year 392" (8). Jaeger places it "somewhere between 390 and 380" (185). Mirandy and Too say "about 390" (xvi). Most concur that Plato opened his school in 387 (Marrou 61).

[42] *Cf. Phaedrus*.

[43] *Cf.* Welch, *Electric* 51.

[44] *Cf.* Perkins 50, Wagner 323, and Johnson, "Note" 298.

[45] *Cf.* Lyotard, *Differend* 208.

[46] *Cf.* Giroux 75.

[47] I want to acknowledge that I recognize that such a definition of those with agency as citizen subjects does become problematic when one considers refugees and stateless persons, but I am not defining citizenship here in legal terms, but rather as provisionally belonging to one community or another.

[48] According to Jaeger, we tend to "return to classical scholarship at times of overpowering historical experience" (1:xxix), so perhaps that is why I am driven to return to Isocrates now.

[49] For example, when New York mayor Rudolph Guiliani stepped down from office at the end of his term, he did not discuss his plans for life as a "civilian," but what he meant to accomplish and contribute to the city as "citizen Guiliani." According to the January 2002 Harper's Index, the "last year in which Americans' confidence in the federal government 'to do what is right' was as high as it is today" was 1968 (11). In addition, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported on January 13, 2002, that "compared with members of the older Generation X, [the 20-year-old] demographic group is generally less cynical, more likely to work together and more prone to profess allegiance to 'traditional' values" (Leith C1). This assertion was based on research completed by the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson of Atlanta.

[50] Robert L. Scott echoes this sentiment: "One who acts without certainty," he says, "must embrace the responsibility for the inevitable harm. To act with good intentions for good consequences, but to accept the responsibilities for all the consequences insofar as they can be known is part of what being ethical must mean" (qtd. in McComiskey, *Gorgias* 62).

[51] I acknowledge Neel's point that "no imaginable set of influences necessarily predicts success in the classroom" (*Plato* 5).

Chapter 1

[1] According to Kimball, the "colonial American schoolboy desiring admission to Harvard in the late 17th, early 18th century had to demonstrate [. . .] familiarity with standard classical authors, especially Cicero and Vergil in Latin and Isocrates and the New Testament in Greek" (103). In contrast, how many instructors in today's academy would even recognize Isocrates' name? I would venture to say not many.

[2] *Cf.* Touraine 25, Cohen 16.

[3] These aims clearly echo Isocrates, who held a great belief in the civilizing power of discourse and who was constantly urging his fellow Hellenes into war against the "barbarians." I am not, however, arguing that we should adopt similar attitudes in a (re)new(ed) Isocratean classroom. In fact, the purpose of a (re)new(ed) Isocratean rhetoric would not be to silence others, but to encourage them to join in the debate (see Kasteley 14).

[4] That this attitude generally remains in place today can be seen by the fact that "many in the public and in the academy think that first-year writing courses should be either about great literature or matters of grammar and mechanical correctness" (Faigley 77).

[5] *Cf.* Spring 304.

[6] *Cf.* Cohen 169.

[7] *Cf.* Bledstein 288-289.

[8] It is important to recall that, as we have already seen, Isocrates frequently was overlooked and his adapters Cicero and Quintilian were more often given credit as the pedagogical models for the classical trivium instead.

[9] According to Bledstein, the culture of professionalism tends to breed public attitudes of "submission and passivity" (104) as citizens increasingly trust professionals to make their decisions for them since, as ordinary citizens, they are "absorbed by the business of making a living" (105).

[10] Mauk makes an interesting suggestion that is worth mentioning here. He suggests not that the classroom needs to be conceived of as a "public" space, but that "[s]tudents need to conceive the space outside of the campus, outside of the classroom, as academic" (380).

[11] *Cf.* Crowley and Hawhee 9-10.

[12] The existence of an Isocratean *technē* is debated by scholars. For example, Cahn argues that Isocrates' "true achievement" was "the fact that he never wrote a handbook of the art" (144). Papillon, on the other hand, suggest that Isocrates may have created "a handbook that is unique and seminal in that it did not use short tags as examples, but whole speeches (or at least large pieces). The speeches would be discussed in a *techne*, setting them up and analyzing them" (156). I tend to agree with those scholars who argue that there is no lost Isocratean *Art of Rhetoric*.

[13] I agree with Corbett that "we can make educated guesses about [Isocrates'] general method, however" and that we can safely say that he "did not spend much of [his] time in the classroom dispensing theory and rules" ("Isocrates' Legacy" 270).

[14] *Cf. To Demonicus* 4, *Panathenaicus* 87.

[15] *Areopagiticus* 48.

[16] *Cf.* Cohen 22.

[17] *Cf. To Nicocles* 8.

[18] Although a student's potential audience today is much larger and less likely to be familiar with his or her reputation, the advantages of developing a credible public ethos is still an important lesson our students should be taught, especially if they do develop the habit of producing and distributing public discourses, since they will be more likely in that case to develop a more extensive public reputation.

[19] I recognize that this may be a somewhat idealized description of the early classical curriculum, and I acknowledge the validity of Graff's assertion that in practice "[c]lassroom concerns hardly ever went beyond the endless memorization and recitation of grammatical and etymological particularities" (28) and that it was the student-formed literary societies that generally provided "a context of cultural debate through which students could make sense of their studies" (46). *Cf.* Kimball 123. However, regardless of whether original student compositions actually were foregrounded in practice or not, it certainly is safe to say that such performances were at least openly recognized as a central objective.

[20] *Cf.* Connors, "Mechanical" 66 and Crowley, *Methodical* 136. According to Graff, some of the composition courses at Harvard were taught in classes "as large as 500 students" (66)!

[21] *Cf.* Kitzhaber 105.

[22] *Cf.* Russell, *Writing* 84-92.

[23] While I can understand and even empathize with Bacon's point that "[t]he distinction between the artificial classroom and the real world is overly simplistic; really, students are being asked to write for both a teacher and a community audience, [so] perhaps it is not surprising that the teacher—with whom they have more contact, and whose power may be more salient in their lives—sometimes comes first" (43), I agree more strongly with Heilker that "[c]omposition students have suffered for too long in courses and classrooms that are palpably *unreal* rhetorical situations. Their audiences are not real audiences; their purposes not real purposes. In most cases, students are writing to the teacher, to an audience of one, who is required and paid to read the text at hand, who is almost always both a better writer and more knowledgeable about the subject matter than the writers, and who is reading primarily to find error and grade the formal attributes of the text" (71). Even when students are asked to write to their peers in the class, or to invent "real world" scenarios, "students are almost always writing with an ultimately unreal rhetorical purpose, seeking not to persuade or inform or entertain but to complete an assignment in a required course. Given these conditions, it seems little wonder that so

many students are convinced that writing has nothing to do with the 'real world'" (Heilker 71).

[24] *Cf. Panathenaicus* 200.

[25] It is worth remembering, as Parker reminds us, that "[e]arly teachers of 'English' were also, usually, teachers of speech" (343). I would also agree with him that although "[w]e cannot turn back the clock and bring speech back into English departments," there are not sufficient reasons "for English abandoning all training in speech and oral composition" (350).

[26] As Petraglia points out, "the problem solving entailed in writing for real audiences, with real purposes, using situationally appropriate information differs significantly from cognition devoted to *appearing* to address an audience, *looking like* you have a purpose, and *pretending* to be knowledgeable" (92).

[27] As Trimbur points out, "Packaged in anthologies and uniform in appearance, written texts take on an equivalent look that belies their actual circulation in the world" ("Composition" 195).

[28] One advantage, of course, of having various texts that focus on a particular issue conveniently grouped together for students is that they may be able to see how they might create contexts for discussing the issue in their own writing by reading a range of other opinions about the topic.

[29] *Cf.* Ohmann 136 and Corbett, "Literature" 179.

[30] Some "writing across the curriculum" programs currently seek to help students make connections between their diverse college classes through synthetic writing projects, but do not as often include an element that seeks to take the students' writing beyond the classroom and into the public sphere. On the other hand, some "service learning" programs do take student writing into the public sphere, but do an insufficient job of getting students to reflect meaningfully on their experiences or to move beyond a sense of having helped those "less fortunate" than themselves, which "do[es] little to break their sense of distance and otherness, or their sense of necessary superiority" (Flower, "Partners" 99).

[31] For example, Kitzhaber, Johnson, *Nineteenth-Century*, Brereton, Berlin, *Writing Instruction*, Connors, *Composition-Rhetoric,* and Crowley, *Methodical Memory* and *Composition in the University*.

[32] *Cf.* S. Miller, *Textual* on this "selective tradition"(43).

[33] *Cf.* Glickman.

[34] According to Kimball, "the underlying lesson" of the *Antidosis* is "that searching for truth without giving commensurate attention to the importance of public expression inevitably leads the individual to isolation and self-indulgence and the republic to amoralism and chaos" (238).

[35] *Cf.* Touraine 81, Rudolph 118 and 207, and Veysey 138-143.

[36] This trend has culminated in the "publish or perish" environment in today's universities in which "although one might be a most excellent teacher, and although effective teaching might lead untold students to self-discovery and self-mastery, the organization demand[s] something else: [. . .] research" (Rudolph 404).

[37] *Cf.* Graff 83-85.

[38] I acknowledge the validity of the criticism that it is "difficult to call composition rhetoric under another name" (Douglas 98) because composition courses were not actually meant to *replace* earlier rhetorical education (S. Miller, *Textual* 80, Crowley, *Methodical* 141). Susan Miller's position that "composition was not established as a failed set of practices or a diminution and debasement of classical rhetoric, but as a consciously selected menu to test students' knowledge of graphic conventions, to certify their propriety, and to socialize them into good academic manners" (*Textual* 66) also certainly is worth considering, but I still remain more convinced by the "master narrative" of the "tragic fall" of rhetoric.

[39] *Cf.* Graff 42, Ohmann 17, and S. Miller, *Textual* 75.

[40] *Cf.* T. Miller 10.

[41] This also seems to account for the reason why the second semester of "composition" in many first-year writing programs often turns out to be a course in literature appreciation and literary criticism thinly disguised as an "expository" or "persuasive" writing course. Although these courses typically have a very different imagined audience for writers and different writing objectives than the first-semester course consisting of non-fiction argument, they often utilize the same assessment techniques and grading criteria for the students' writing in both courses, which contributes to our students' overgeneralized conception of "academic discourse."

[42] *Cf.* Knoblauch and Brannon 32-33.

[43] In fact, few professors in America ever did receive formal training in rhetoric. Those scholars who received graduate degrees in language from German universities usually studied philology rather than rhetoric. The unpopularity of rhetoric in German universities was made strikingly evident by the fact that Nietzsche only had 2 students in his 1872-73 course in rhetoric at the University of Basel.

[44] As Kitzhaber explains, "for inexperienced teachers, or those who are heavily burdened with paper correction, or those who have no particular interest in teaching composition,

who look at it as something to be got through as quickly and painlessly as possible—for all these a dogmatic text is often valuable. It discourages questions from students, it simplifies the teacher's job of exposition [and evaluation], it saves time" (62).

[45] *Cf.* Welch, *Contemporary* 84.

[46] Although, since the implementation of graduate programs in rhetoric and composition in the 1970s, there are now more college and university writing instructors who have been specifically trained in writing pedagogy, most teachers of composition continue to be English department graduate students who are pursuing degrees in literature or part-timers who have received post-secondary degrees in literature.

[47] *Cf.* Knoblauch and Brannon 42-46 and Gage 13-14.

Chapter 2

[1] For some examples of more comprehensive studies, see G. Kennedy, *Classical*, Murphy, *Short History*, Conley, Vickers, and Enos, *Greek*.

[2] *Cf.* Plato, *Protagoras* 326C, Beck 81.

[3] As Socrates tells Hippocrates in Plato's dialogue *Protagoras*, "When you took your lessons from [your language-master, your harp-teacher, and your sports-instructor] it was not in the technical way, with a view to becoming a professional, but for education, as befits a private gentleman" (312B). A modern elaboration of this theme can be found in Freeman who states, "To a Hellene education meant the training of character and taste, and the symmetrical development of body, mind, and imagination. He would not have included under so honorable a name either any course of instruction in which the pupils mastered their future trade or profession, or any accumulation of knowledge undertaken with the object of making money" (42-43).

[4] Greek citizens at this time were by definition male and free.

[5] According to Havelock, "Organized instruction in reading at the primary level, that is, before the age of ten, cannot have been introduced into the Athenian schools much earlier than about 430 B.C." (*Literate* 187), so Isocrates would have been seven at that time. Furthermore, it seems likely that Isocrates' father, as a tradesman, could read and write and therefore that Isocrates would have received his initial literary training at an early age and that his later training with the Sophists would therefore have constituted advanced training in literary criticism and in the invention and arrangement of political and judicial discourses.

[6] Most evidence suggests that it was Protagoras who "invented" grammar as well as "made a crucial analytical leap: from repetition of poetry to the critical analysis of poetry" (Schiappa, *Protagoras* 57).

[7] According to Kerferd, "the main instruction by sophists was given quite certainly neither in public lectures nor in public debates, but in smaller classes or seminars such as are depicted [in Plato's dialogue *Protagoras*] in the house of Callias when the young Hippocrates comes to seek instruction from Protagoras" (30).

[8] The periods between visits could be quite long. For example, in Plato's dialogue *Protagoras*, Hippocrates rouses Socrates from his bed in the middle of the night to urge him to accompany him to hear Protagoras speak. Hippocrates is so excited because the last time the great Sophist had visited Athens Hippocrates was just a child (310E).

[9] In Plato's dialogue, Protagoras is described as bringing several "strangers" with him "from the several cities which he traverses" (315A).

[10] *Cf.* Dionysius (103) and Plutarch.

[11] *Cf.* Jebb 5, Norlin 1:xiii.

[12] Norlin assigns some historical accuracy to the "warm admiration" of Isocrates expressed by the character Socrates in Plato's dialogue the *Phaedrus* and claims that this "indicates that there was at one time a close relationship between the young Isocrates and his teacher" (1:xvi-xvii); he does, however, acknowledge that such a claim is debatable.

[13] *Cf. To Demonicus* 6-8, 19, and 37-38, and *To Nicocles* 32.

[14] As Isocrates told Demonicus, "Consider that nothing in human life is stable; for then you will not exult overmuch in prosperity, nor grieve overmuch in adversity" (*To Demonicus* 42). *Cf. Panegyricus* 48.

[15] *Cf. Panathenaicus* 10. Some modern critics suggest that Isocrates may have manufactured his physical limitations. According to Welch, Isocrates appears to have "arranged an explanation of physical impairment to keep live audiences away" in order to allow himself "the solitariness that writing requires" (*Contemporary* 145).

[16] *Cf. Antidosis* 174.

[17] *Cf.* Endnote 41 in the Introduction to this dissertation.

[18] *Cf. Antidosis* 87.

[19] *Cf. To Demonicus* 18: "What you have come to know, preserve by exercise; what you have not learned, seek to add to your knowledge."

[20] Schiappa provides compelling evidence "that the word *rhêtorikê* may have been coined by Plato" (*Protagoras* 40).

[21] According to Isocrates, "the writing and publication of [my discourses] has won me distinction in many parts of the world and brought me many disciples" (*Antidosis* 86-87).

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22 As Norlin notes, "among his students were the orators Isaeus, Lycurgus, and Hypereides; the historians Ephorus and Theopompus; the philosopher Speusippus; and the statesman and general Timotheus" (1:xxix). Isocrates himself brags that a number of his students were "crowned by Athens with chaplets of gold [in recognition of public service], not because they were covetous of other people's possessions, but because they were honorable men and had spent large sums of their private fortunes upon the city" (*Antidosis* 94). *Cf.* Cicero, *De Oratore* II.94, Philostratus (xxx), Dionysius (106), and Plutarch (373-375).

23 In practice, just as in our current democratic society, few of the poorer citizens would have been likely to submit their names to the pool of qualified candidates since they did not have the abundant leisure time of the moneyed classes and could not afford to spend extended periods away from their livelihoods to debate in the Assembly, even though a small compensation fee was administered for all magistrates in a token effort to create the illusion of equal opportunity among the social classes. Furthermore, in the few positions that were determined by general election, just as today, the candidates with the most money were more likely to have the greatest "brand-name" recognition and consequently receive the most votes.

24 Isocrates was most strongly a supporter of limited democracy of Solon, when the council of the Areopagiticus—"a body which was composed exclusively of men who were of noble birth"—ruled over the Hellenes (*Areopagiticus* 37) and offices were not filled "by lot from all the citizens, but [by] selecting the best and the ablest for each function of the state" (*Areopagiticus* 22). To some, this "limited democracy" was strikingly close to an oligarchy, or "rule of the best" rather than rule of the people (Norlin 1:75). Additionally, although Isocrates claimed that he was "not in favor of oligarchy or special privilege, but of a just and orderly government of the people" (*Areopagiticus* 70), on another occasion he advocated freedom of speech, but only for "those who have good judgment" (*To Nicocles* 28), by which he generally meant those of high birth, but which also included those who had received an education comparable to the one he offered in his school, an education available, of course, only to those who could afford it. Isocrates was also criticized for corresponding with kings like the Cyprian monarch Nicocles, but in his defense, he claims to have expressed himself to Nicocles "as a free man" and argued that his discourse pled for "the cause of his [Nicocles'] subjects" in order to "secure for them the mildest government possible" (*Antidosis* 70). His preference for democracy, however limited, and his concern for the larger population can also be seen by the fact that he considered the best governments to be those that "best serve the masses" (*To Nicocles* 16) and by virtue of the fact that he insisted that the people must be given "authority over their rulers" (*Areopagiticus* 27).

25 He gave similar advice to Nicocles, telling him to make a practice "to talk of things that are good and honorable, that your thoughts may through habit come to be like your words" (*To Nicocles* 38).

26 *Cf.* Proussis 69.

[27] *Cf. To Demonicus* 4.

[28] *Cf. Nicocles* 57.

[29] *Cf. On the Peace* 33-34.

[30] George Kennedy suggests that Corax and Tisias "are probably the same person. Corax means 'crow' and is an unusual personal name for a Greek. It is probably a nickname, and the inventor of a system of rhetoric should be known as 'Tisias the Crow,' since the rhetorical teaching attributed to Tisias by Plato seems identical to that attributed to Corax by Aristotle" (*Classical* 21).

[31] *Cf.* Cicero, *De Oratore* 1.20.91 and *Brutus* 12.46, Quintilian 2.17.7, and Plato, *Phaedrus* 273B. Cole, on the other hand, claims that "the radical clarity with which Plato and Aristotle established and maintained [the hierarchy of philosophy over rhetoric] sets them apart from their contemporaries and predecessors and makes them—not Tisias, Corax, and their successors—the true founders of rhetoric as well as of philosophy" (29).

[32] In Plato's dialogue the *Phaedrus*, Socrates reminds Phaedrus that "Tisias whom you have studied carefully [says] that probability is that which most people think" (273B). However, according to Schiappa, "it is unlikely that Corax and Tisias espoused a theory that a 'probable' logos was preferable to stricter, absolute, or more careful logic" (*Protagoras* 51).

[33] This may be first example of a formal list of the first three canons of rhetoric: *invention*—"to choose from those elements those which should be employed for each subject"; *arrangement*—"to join them together, to arrange them properly"; and *style*—"to adorn the whole speak with striking thoughts and to clothe it in flowing and melodious phrase." *Cf.* G. Kennedy, *Classical* 42. The fact that this list does not include the final canons of memory and delivery should not be taken as an indication that Isocrates was not aware of their importance. On the contrary, Isocrates knew that memory was a key factor in the cultural power and social/historical context of any discourse and he encouraged his students to deliver their prose in melodious phrases meant both to aid the audience's memory of the discourse and their pleasure in hearing it.

[34] *Cf. Areopagitus* 13.

[35] The epics were Pan-Hellenic in nature and served as examples to all Greek-speaking peoples (Havelock, *Preface* 119). The epic poems most likely were a strong influence on Isocrates' later strident calls to PanHellenism, as was Gorgias.

[36] *Cf.* Havelock, *Preface* 27-31.

[37] Robb concurs that the vocabulary of the epics was an ethical vocabulary meant to exhort and praise "correct behavior" (159). *Cf.* Plato, *Protagoras* 326A.

[38] *Cf. Against the Sophists* 2.

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[39] *Cf. To Nicocles* 3 and 13, *To Demonicus* 51.

[40] *Cf. Against the Sophists* 18 and *Antidosis* 208.

[41] de Romilly also argues that poetry should be "treated as a kind of proto-rhetoric" (7).

[42] Even Schiappa agrees that "Empedocles was an innovator in poetic composition and had a reputation as a successful persuasive speaker; this combination would make him a believable candidate for the inventor of a poetic-logical style of discourse [which Schiappa refuses to label "rhetoric"] further advanced by Gorgias and others" (*Protagoras* 54).

[43] Protagoras' "man is the measure" doctrine clearly is derived from these early investigations.

[44] This may have led to the popular complaint that men who are trained in discourse production "are corrupted and demoralized by it" so that when they gain the power to speak well "they scheme to get other people's property" (*Antidosis* 198).

[45] Neel agrees that "sophistical rhetoric is both a study of how to make choices and a study of how choices form character and make good citizens" (*Plato* 211).

[46] *Cf.* Plato's *Gorgias* 447C in which Gorgias is said to be "pressing for whatever questions anyone in the house might like to ask, and saying he would answer them all."

[47] For example, in Plato's dialogue *Gorgias*, the title character boldly proclaims that "if a rhetorician and a doctor were to enter any city you please, and there had to contend in speech before the Assembly or some other meeting as to which of the two should be appointed physician, you would find the physician was nowhere, while the master of speech would be appointed if he wished [. . .] for there is no subject on which the rhetorician could not speak more persuasively than a member of any other profession whatsoever, before a multitude" (456B-C).

[48] *Cf.* Schiappa, "Isocrates'" 35.

[49] John Poulakos argues that "Isocrates did not so much seek to represent the Sophists' rhetoric in the 4th century or to bring their accomplishments to a higher level of perfection as to produce a rhetoric responsive to the exigencies of his time" ("Early" 310). If this is so, he continues, "the passage from sophistical to Isocratean rhetoric may be studied more profitably in terms of discontinuous, not continuous change" (310).

[50] The word "philosophy" in Isocrates' day had "no definite association with speculative or abstract thought, signifying only a lover of wisdom or a seeker after the cultivated life" (Norlin 1:xxvii). For Isocrates, philosophy was closer to a theory of culture or παιδεία (paideia) or an art of discourse.

[51] *Cf. Against the Sophists* 21.

[52] It is worth noting here that later in his examination of the Sophists, Kennedy makes an argument that most of them did in fact believe "that the orator should be morally good" (*Classical* 50).

[53] For instance, there does seem to be some evidence that students did compose original, if generally imitative, poems at school, as did men at private recreational gatherings.

[54] *Cf.* Welch, *Electric* 51.

[55] *Cf. To Demonicus* 34.

Chapter 3

[1] I borrow this definition of "against" from Vitanza.

[2] George Kennedy and John Poulakos differ in their assessments of the impact of sophistic rhetoric on Isocrates' program. According to Kennedy, "sophistic rhetoric, rhetoric as understood by Gorgias and other sophists, [was] carried to full development by Isocrates in the fourth century" (*Classical* 14). Poulakos, on the other hand, claims that "Isocrates did not so much seek to represent the Sophists' rhetoric in the 4th century or to bring their accomplishments to a higher level of perfection as to produce a rhetoric responsive to the exigencies of his time. But if this is so, the passage from sophistical to Isocratean rhetoric may be studied more profitably in terms of discontinuous, not continuous change" ("From" 310).

[3] *Cf.* Plato, *Euthydemus* 305C.

[4] *Cf.* Carroll 43.

[5] It was most likely during this time that Isocrates got the idea for his *Panegyricus* from Gorgias' Olympian address. In fact, this is one piece of evidence that contributes to the scholarly speculation that he probably owes to Gorgias' teaching and example "the idea which he later made peculiarly his own, namely, that the highest oratory should concern itself with broad, pan-Hellenic themes" (Norlin 1:xiii).

[6] *Cf.* Aristotle, *On Rhetoric* III.1404a.

[7] According to George Kennedy, for example, Isocrates' "concern with the subject matter is largely incidental. It is grist for his technique. He was tiresome, long-winded, and above all superficial" (*Art* 203).

[8] *Cf. Nicocles* 1-10.

[9] For example, his systematic movement through the four arguments in the *Encomium of Helen* demonstrates "a method of logical proof" and the various appeals to the judges made by the title character of the *Palamedes* alternately utilize "logical proof, ethos, and pathos" (G. Kennedy, *Art* 169-170).

[10] Gorgias seems to have understood that "the power of logos in its manifold artistic variations penetrates to the soul by evoking an individual knowledge of a multiplicity which, through synthesis in the consciousness of the individual, takes on the complexion of something that is at the same time being put forward as supra-individual" (Untersteiner 115).

[11] *Cf.* Lyotard, *Just* 99.

[12] The influence Gorgias had on Isocrates was so strong, according to Schiappa, that "a dialogue on public discourse titled *Gorgias* that included thinly veiled references to Isocrates would easily have been recognized in the fourth century as an attack on the training afforded by Isocrates" (*Protagoras* 45).

[13] *Cf.* Lyotard, *Just* 26.

[14] *Cf.* Bryant 291.

[15] *Cf.* Fish, *Doing* 459.

[16] *Cf.* Plato, *Protagoras* 317B.

[17] The plausibility of this statement rests upon the assumption that Plato represented the speeches of the characters in his dialogues with at least some modicum of historical accuracy. Another possible explanation for the similarity between the theories of Plato's Protagoras and Isocrates is that Isocrates himself was the model for Plato's Protagoras.

[18] For Isocrates, natural ability was "paramount" and came "before all else" (*Antidosis* 189).

[19] In Plato's dialogue *Protagoras*, Socrates regards this practice with derision and accuses the title character of "hawking" his services "to any odd purchaser who desires them" (313D).

[20] Even so, Plato's Socrates describes Protagoras as having a "voice like Orpheus" (315B) and claims that by listening to him he has come "under his spell" (328D).

[21] *Cf.* Plato, *Protagoras* 318A.

[22] *Cf. Against the Sophists* 4.

[23] *Cf.* Plato, *Meno* 99-100.

[24] *Cf. Gorgias* 449B and 461D, *Protagoras* 329B.

[25] As Schiappa explains, the "separation of philosophy from direct involvement in civic affairs" advocated by Socrates in the *Gorgias* was "anathema" to Isocrates ("Isocrates'" 46).

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[26] *Cf.* Astin 45.

[27] *Cf.* Foucault, *Archaeology* 219 *ff.*

[28] *Cf.* Bloom, "Why" 143, 150, Welch, *Electric* 70, and Russell, "Where" 288.

[29] *Cf.* Moore and Kleine 99.

[30] *Cf.* Ruszkiewicz 27-28.

[31] *Cf.* Erickson 10, Coulter 31 *ff.*

[32] *Cf.* Neel, *Plato* 25.

[33] *Cf.* G. Kennedy, *Art* 176.

[34] Isocrates was clearly aware that "naming a practice facilitates it becoming a site of power and knowledge" (Schiappa, *Beginnings* 184). Eventually, however, Isocrates lost his struggle with Plato and became known to prosperity as a "Sophist" or a "rhetorician" rather than a "philosopher."

[35] *Cf.* Kimball 18.

[36] *Cf. To Demonicus* 52: "Acquaint yourself with the best things in the poets, and learn from the other wise men also any useful lesson they have taught." *To Nicocles* 13: "You should listen to the poets and learn from the sages and so equip your mind to judge those who are inferior and to emulate those who are superior to yourself."

[37] As Lyotard remarks, "the one who reads is the one who requests, one who calls. The one who writes is bound by this request, is upset, beside oneself, unsure whether one is binding or liberating oneself by writing. He or she puts him-or herself in our hands as readers" (*Differend* 113).

[38] While we can not condone the rigorous and biased entrance requirements of Isocrates, I would argue that we can also strategically assume that we are teaching decent young people and helping them develop their already good habits and that we should be aware of our status as a model to whom our students will look for guidance in developing their own sense of their ethics, their social and political activities, and their public discursive performances.

[39] *Cf. Antidosis* 94.

[40] According to Schiappa, "the word *rhêtorikê* may have been coined by Plato in the process of composing the *Gorgias* around 385 B.C.E." (*Protagoras* 40). Halliwell disagrees. He claims that "the term *rhetorike* was not a Platonic invention: at its first

occurrence in the *Gorgias* (448d9), Socrates refers to 'so-called *rhetorike*,' thereby indicating unambiguously that the word already had some currency" (224).

[41] *Cf. Nicocles* 8.

[42] This sounds somewhat similar to Isocrates' advice to Demonicus to only speak "when the subject is one which you thoroughly know" (*To Demonicus* 41).

[43] In fact, many scholars regard Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as *the* most complete articulation of the art. According to Crowley and Hawhee, "Aristotle's text on rhetoric has received more scholarly attention during the twentieth century than it did during all the rest of its long history. Probably for this reason, the Aristotelean theory of rhetoric is usually what is meant when a contemporary scholar or teacher refers to classical rhetoric" (24).

[44] *Cf.* Norlin 1: xxix.

[45] *Cf.* Schiappa, "Isocrates'" 56.

[46] Twenty-one of his original discourses are wholly or partially preserved (including six of his commissioned forensic speeches), along with nine letters. His last extant text, a letter to King Philip of Macedon, was written merely days before he died, at the age of 98, just after Philip had triumphed at the battle of Chaeroneia. Certainly "the excellent preservation of his texts," if nothing else, "bears witness to the importance attached to him in antiquity" (Norlin 1:xxx).

[47] Cahn describes Isocrates' "skepticism about the possibility of technical knowledge in rhetorical matters" and his "critique of rhetorical handbooks, strict rules, and set speeches" as "uniquely radical" and points out the "even Cicero, who insisted repeatedly on the limits of these teachings, circulated his rhetorical treatises as handbooks of the art" (139). Some critics, however, speculate that Isocrates may have written an *Art of Rhetoric* that was subsequently lost (Norlin 1:xxx). I do not concur with this opinion.

[48] *Cf.* Quintilian, *Orator's Education* 3.1.14.

[49] *Cf. Rhetoric* 1357a.

[50] *Cf.* endnote 33, Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

[51] *Cf.* Kimball 41, G. Kennedy, *Art* 174.

[52] *Cf.* Bizzell and Herzberg 43.

Chapter 4

[1] Such an addition would not put an undue strain on our students. As Berlin points out in his proposal for a four-year program of rhetoric classes, "Since many (and perhaps most) schools now require a two-semester freshman composition sequence and another writing

course during the junior or senior year, this plan would require only one additional course" (*Composition* 55).

2 *Cf.* Klumpp 77.

3 As Berlin says, "students must learn to locate the beneficiaries and the victims of knowledge, exerting their rights as citizens in a democracy to criticize freely those in power" (*Rhetorics, Poetics* 52).

4 *Cf.* Lyotard, *Just* 27.

5 I realize some critics might object to my insistence that students should be held responsible or accountable for their discursive performances and the results of those discourses since "responsibility" can be implicated with accountability, guilt, Nietzschean *ressentiment*, and enslavement. These same critics might also object to my insistence that each discursive act have some kind of use value within a communicative economy of exchange.

6 *Cf.* Fish, *Doing* 459.

7 This does not mean, however, that students would only be engaging with current texts. On the contrary, they would also be examining texts from the past to utilize as examples and precedents and would be asked to consider how and why those texts have bearing on the present issues they are negotiating.

8 I am not suggesting here that what students write must be entirely "original" or "novel," but rather that as they seek to "collect the greatest number of ideas scattered among the thoughts of all the rest and present them in the best form" (*To Nicocles* 41) they do so in a reflective and critical way . In other words, while they certainly should not "shun the subjects on which others have spoken before," they should seek "to speak as no one else could" in order to bring "the most profit to those who hear" (*Panegyricus* 4-10), and they should have a greater sense of purpose than pleasing the teacher or fulfilling the requirement to use a certain number of sources.

9 It is worth mentioning once again that although Isocrates' definition of a "citizen" was elitist and sexist, I do not agree with his limited definition. Instead, I am seeking to overturn Isocrates' restricted definition and to include within my description of the word "citizen" people of all ages, races, genders, classes, and nationalities.

10 *Cf.* Matalene 185.

11 *Cf.* Wells 328.

12 Of course, we may not necessarily approve of our students' choices, but if we are sincere about being democratic, we are "ethically bound to honor [the] students' own aims, even if those aims seem uncomfortably close to elite values" (George 101).

[13] Trimbur makes the point that while he endorses "the turn to public writing, civic rhetoric, and community service learning that is often invoked in such assignments, [. . .] at the same time [he wants] to resist the notion that student writing is not otherwise part of the 'real world.' While these kinds of assignments do begin to address the problem of circulation in interesting ways," he continues, "they depend nonetheless on a dichotomy between schooled and 'real' writing that rejects the private space of the classroom/home in the name of an unproblematical, immediately available public writing. Moreover, counterposing the 'real world' to the classroom draws upon a gendered separation of spheres that fails to see how the public and private merge in the domestic space" ("Composition" 195). I would respond to Trimbur's criticism by saying that an Isocratean classroom would not present "real world" writing as either "unproblematical" or "immediately available," but would in fact problematize the very nature of access to and participation in such writing. In addition, although Isocrates undeniably dismissed the private/domestic discourse of women, his conception of the interconnectedness between public and private spaces, between the governance of one's household and the governance of the *polis*, is a useful means of reconnecting students' conceptions of the merged nature of public and private spaces and public and private discourses. *Cf.* Schiappa, "Isocrates'" 59 and Neel, *Plato* 207. It also is worth considering the idea that because a (re)new(ed) civic rhetoric necessarily would be communal and relational that it could be, in some ways, regarded as feminine discourse.

[14] *Cf.* Cambridge 177 on the characteristics of "democratic intelligence."

[15] *Cf.* Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* Chapter 5.

[16] Some praiseworthy textbook editors do attempt to overcome this problem by providing students with introductions or reader's notes preceding the anthologized selections that state when and where the selections first appeared and what type of readership the original publication usually expects.

[17] This is not to say that such courses do not have their own intrinsic value in a literate culture, but, as I noted earlier, I do not agree with they way that they often are thinly disguised literature appreciation and literary criticism courses presented under the auspices of first-year writing.

[18] See the sample list of assignments in Appendix A for a requirement for students to observe and engage in oral arguments throughout the semester in a (re)new(ed) Isocratean classroom.

[19] *Cf.* Enos, "Ancient" 32.

[20] As Crowley and Hawhee explain, "Our culture does not look at disagreement as a way of uncovering alternative courses of action. Americans often refuse to debate each other about important matters like religion or politics, retreating into silence if someone brings either subject up in public discourse. In fact, if someone disagrees publicly with someone

else about politics or religion, Americans sometimes take that as a breach of good manners" (2).

[21] I want to be clear that I am not suggesting that writing teachers take on the task of teaching oral debating strategies as well as writing. I am merely suggesting that asking students to present and defend their written arguments out loud before a live audience is an excellent method not only for testing the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments and for garnering a sense of potential counter-arguments that can be used to make revisions, but such practices can also prepare students to be ready to defend their written arguments when confronted by someone who has read them and to craft arguments quickly in situations that do not allow for multiple revisions.

[22] *Cf. Panathenaicus* 200 where Isocrates recounts that "after I had written out [the] discourse as far as what has been read, I was revising it with three or four youths [. . .] And when, on going over what I had written, it seemed to us to be good and to require only an ending, it occurred to me to send for one of those who had studied with me [. . .] in order that, if any false statement had escaped me, he might detect it and point it out."

[23] One of the most important media options should be electronic. I agree with Welch that writing courses need "to become a site for the advancement of digital literacy and for explorations of what happens to subjectivity and ethics when we commune with our relatively new machines" (*Electric* 40).

[24] Although I place my hope for altering composition's secondary status in the academy (especially in departments of English) in a revised pedagogy, some postmodernists like Davis reason that "it may be time to stop offering more pedagogy or altered pedagogy in answer to the failure of pedagogy. The pedagogical imperative has been responsible for perpetuating a subtle reign of terror in universities and schoolhouses, and it may be time to call the whole sordid affair into question" (213). In fact, "Third-Sophistic" rhetoricians like Davis and Vitanza implicate Isocrates, as the founder of the first "schoolhouse" of higher education, in this "subtle reign" of pedagogical terror. Crowley also believes sufficient changes in composition pedagogy will not be made possible "solely by tampering with [Freshman English's] curriculum. However," she goes on, "we might be able to alter the functions of Freshman English by altering its institutional status. In this spirit, I offer a modest proposal. Let's abolish the universal requirement" (*Composition* 241). While Crowley's and Davis's proposals are enticing, I believe that while administrators and other policymakers may be willing to implement a *revised* curriculum and to move the first-year course into a new department, they will not agree to throw out the first-year writing requirement altogether. After all, as Greenbaum, Berlin, Connors, and others have amply chronicled, every time educators or administrators have attempted to abolish the first-year writing requirement, it has been followed quickly by a public outcry about the literary incompetence of college graduates and just as quickly reinstated. Furthermore, it is worth remembering, as Lowe reminds us, that for teachers "it is imperative to understand that we work within a larger social structure that demands things like accountability and standards" (21). As a result, I think we must reluctantly

concede with him that, unfortunately, "teachers of composition will never be solely allowed to set the national agenda for writing" (21).

[25] *Cf.* Davidson who speculates, "Perhaps the writers we help to train today will become more engaged, powerful agents of change and persuasion in the public domain. If they can see themselves linked in history to a tradition of rhetoric and persuasive oratory, as designers of texts rather than passive victims of rules, they may indeed help us change our own discourse into something more vibrant and engaging" (127). Petraglia also makes the point that while some of the contributors to his 1995 anthology *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction* recommended "that we turn our backs on the very idea of the general skills composition course," most held out "the hope that a reformed notion of writing instruction can be made to work" (xiii).

[26] *Cf.* Kimball 263-267.

[27] Of course I realize that this ideal situation would be extremely difficult to accomplish in practice, especially at those institutions that rely heavily on itinerate writing teachers such as graduate students, part-timers, and non-tenure-track instructors.

[28] This is not a new idea. As Connors points out, "From a very early point, abolitionists have been claiming that freshman composition should be replaced with one or another system that would take responsibility for literacy off English teachers and place it on all faculty members" ("New Abolitionism" 23-24).

Conclusion

[1] *Cf.* Plato, *Phaedrus*.

[2] *Cf. To Philip* 25-29.

[3] As McComiskey explains, "Although there were no supersonic airplanes or telecommunication satellites to connect people in a flash during the fifth century BCE, there were, nonetheless, disparate cultures coming into continual contact in Periclean Athens through open, public discourse" (*Gorgias* 110).

[4] As Lyotard explains, "It is necessary to link, but the mode of linkage is never necessary. It is suitable or unsuitable. [. . .] Inside a genre of discourse, the linkings obey rules that determine the stakes and the ends" (*Differend* 29-30).

[5] Colavito cautions us that "we err by catering writing classes to the 'haves' in the Information Age," and he reminds us that "[o]n the classroom level, students who lack resources or time to get access are at a disadvantage, particularly if word processing, on-line discussion, or Internet research are course/assignment requirements" (155-156).

[6] For example, Selfe and Hilligoss have discovered that "computers complicate the teaching of literacy [. . .] Technology, along with the issues that surround its use in reading- and writing-intensive classrooms, both physically and intellectually disrupts the

ways in which we make meaning—the ways in which we communicate. Computers change the ways in which we read, construct, and interpret texts" (1).

7 *Cf.* Poster 101. Of course, not everyone agrees that the Internet should be celebrated as making a more participatory democracy possible. In fact, Brooke argues that "[n]othing could be further from the truth" than the claims that "the Internet and its various platforms are inherently democratic" (24).

8 Unlike Welch, who concentrates much of her argument about "electric rhetoric" on video and television, I am most interested in the computer because, as Porter points out, "unlike television, the electronic network is a medium that calls for the active participation of students, *who must read or write in order to participate*" (6).

9 Nay-sayers, like George Kennedy, disagree. According to Kennedy, "electronic communication lessens the responsibility for what is said, provides an opening not only for quick reaction but for gossip and slander" ("Rhetoric" 58).

10 For a more detailed look at the increasing importance of the canons of memory and delivery in the age of computer-mediated communication see Angela Mitchell's unpublished dissertation "Tracing Rhetorical Visions: Technologies of Memory and Delivery."

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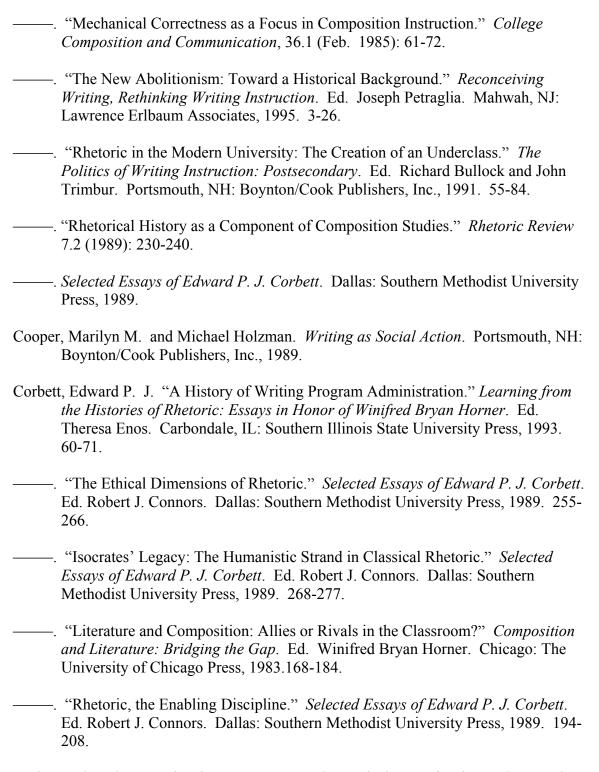
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Appendix A

Sample List of Assignments
Introductory Course in Rhetoric and Civic Discourse
(15 weeks)

Daily classes will consist of workshops centered around work-in-progress. They will be designed to provide practice in the production, critique, and distribution of the types of rhetorical performances that have been assigned.

Recursive writing assignment:

At least once a week throughout the course of the semester, consider these questions and compose your answers in a notebook:
1) How do I use written, spoken, and visual discourse in my day-to-day life? What is my motivation for writing?
2) How am I affected by written, spoken, and visual discourse in my day-to-day life?
3) How do I use my own written, spoken, and visual discourse as a citizen? What other identities do I assume as a writer? To what communities do I provisionally belong?
4) How am I affected by written, spoken, and visual discourse as a citizen?
5) How has my use of written, spoken, and visual discourse changed?

Ethnographic Observations:

-Throughout the semester, attend at least three community/civic events (e.g., a city council meeting, a chamber of commerce meeting, a political rally, a religious rally, a protest, a university president's public address, etc.). One of these events may be observed on public-access television, C-SPAN, or equivalent programming.
-Write a reflective observation of this experience
-As you write, consider these questions:
1) What was the purpose of the event? What actions were expected to result?
2) Who was allowed to speak at the event? Did the speakers answer questions? Did you speak?
3) Who attended the event? Who was able to listen?
4) What were the discourse conventions? How did the speakers try to establish their credibility?
5) Would you attend another event of this kind? Why or why not?
- Share your experience orally with the class. Be prepared to answer questions.

Assignment 1: Letter to an editor (5 weeks total)

(1st two weeks)

Daily: Read the campus newspaper. We will practice the heuristic strategies below as a class, using the campus newspaper as an example. By the end of the second week, we will collaboratively compose a letter to the editor to submit to the campus paper.

-Break into groups of 3-4
-Read a local, regional, or national newspaper for two weeks; pay particularly close attention to the editorial/opinion pages
-As you read, consider these questions:

1) What are the prevalent issues being discussed on these pages? About how many letters are printed each day? How are the letters arranged on the page?
2) What kinds of letters to the editor receive the most responses?
3) What are the discourse conventions (diction, style, etc.) for the letters that are printed?
4) What are the guidelines for submission?
5) Which writers seems most credible/reliable? Why?
6) In what section of the newspaper are the letters to the editor located? What other sections does the newspaper have? What does the composition of these sections suggest?
7) What kinds of articles usually appear on the front page? Who advertises in this newspaper? What do these observations tell you about the expectations/values of the audience? The values of the editors?
8) Who is the readership of this paper? How many are distributed daily? How are they distributed? Is there a web-based version of this paper?
-At the end of the first three weeks, groups will present their findings/observations to the class
-Class members (including the teacher) will choose a topic/issue to address in their own letters to the editor

(3rd week)

Daily: Writing workshops. **NOTE**: Issues of effective and appropriate grammar, mechanics, and other writing conventions will be discussed during the writing workshops each week throughout the semester.

-Write a letter to the editor
-Submit the letter

(Final two weeks)

Daily: Discuss heuristic strategies below and conventions for writing an "academic" critical essay.

-Write a short critical essay
-As you write, consider these questions:
1) Why did you choose to address this issue?
2) Is this a good time to address this issue? How much attention has this issue received lately? What kind of attention has this issue received lately? Who else has been addressing this issue? In what context? What have they left out that you can add? What are they saying that you will say differently/more effectively/more memorably? Is this issue reminiscent of any previous/historical issue? If so, how?
3) Why did you choose to submit your letter to the editor to this newspaper?
4) Did you submit this letter electronically or on paper? Why?
5) What is your intended purpose in writing this letter?
6) What kinds of evidence did you provide to support your opinion?
7) What action(s) do you expect will result when an audience reads this letter?

(Follow-up)

-When various letters appear, discuss why some were printed and others were not
-For those letters that receive printed responses, discuss whether the responses met the author's expectations or not and why

Assignment 2: Letter to a Government, Industry, Educational, Medical, Legal, Entertainment, etc. Official or Group (3 weeks)

(First week-and-a-half)

Daily: We will practice the heuristic strategies below as a class, using the issue we addressed in our letter to the campus newspaper. By the middle of the second week, we will collaboratively write a letter and submit it to the person we think has the best potential for taking action.

-As you conduct your research, consider these questions:
1) Who has the authority to act on my issue?
2) What are the guidelines for contacting this person/group?
3) What are the discourse conventions for this type of letter addressed to this person/group?
4) How will I capture this person/group's attention so that he/she/they pay attention to what I have to say?

(Second week)

Daily: Writing workshops

-Write a letter to a person or group in a position of power to take action on your issue
-Submit

(Final half-week)

Daily: Writing workshops

-Write a short critical essay
-As you compose, consider these questions:
1) How did you discover that this person has some authority to take action on your issue?
2) What kind of official actions can this person take? What actions do you expect him or her to take? Is this a good time to be addressing this issue? Do you expect to receive a response? Why or why not?
3) How did you determine the discourse conventions for addressing a letter to this person?
4) How have you established yourself as someone who deserves the addressee's attention?
5) Did you submit this letter electronically or on paper? Why?

(Follow-up)

-When various responses are received, discuss why some people received responses and others did not. Discuss whether the responses met the author's expectations or not and why

Assignment 3: Electronic Bulletin Board/Listserv (2 weeks)

Daily: We will participate in a listserv whose participants regularly discuss the issue we addressed in the previous two assignments and practice the heuristic strategies below in preparation for writing our critical essays.

-Join an electronic bulletin board or listserv whose participants regularly discuss your issue or one related to it
-Consider these questions:
1) How did you discover this BBS/listserv?
2) What were the requirements for becoming a member?
3) Who makes up the membership?
4) Who does most of the speaking? Who remains silent?
5) What are the discourse conventions?
6) How active is this list (i.e., how often do the members submit comments?)?
7) Are the members of this list generally of the same mind about the issue, or are there frequent debates?

8) Do the members of this list go beyond discussions into taking actions on the issue?
9) How does the BBS/listserv experience compare to live civic speeches/meetings? Is it an effective medium for rallying people to action? Why or why not?
-Write a short critical essay

Assignment 4: Web page (5 weeks)

(First two weeks)

Daily: We will meet in the computer lab and practice designing a website based on our class issue. By the end of the second week, we will make our website accessible to the public.

(Next two weeks)

-Build a web page centered around your issue *Note* No prior web experience is necessary
-Make it accessible to the public

(Final Week)

-Present web pages to class
-Write a short critical essay
-As you write, consider these questions:
1) What is your intended purpose for this website? Who do you expect your audience will be?
2) What actions do you expect will result from the publishing of your website?
3) What responses do you expect to receive? How will you receive them?
4) How do the production, distribution, and reception of this type of discourse differ from the other texts you have written?
5) What are the discourse conventions? How do you know?
6) How have you made your site memorable and credible?

(Follow-up)

-When various students receive responses to their website, discuss why some people received feedback and others did not. Discuss whether the responses met the author's expectations or not and why

Final: Public Speech

Deliver a public speech about your issue. Be prepared to think on your feet and field questions from the audience.

Appendix B

Sample Assessment Guidelines for Practical Application Assignments

Part I: Self-Assessment

Answer the following questions *in detail* (yes/no answers are *not* sufficient) based on the text you have written and distributed:

- Does this issue have a sense of urgency right now? How do you know?
- What was your impetus for addressing this issue? In what context are you addressing it?
- Have you shown that this issue is relevant to the present and to the community? How?
- Is this issue open to dispute? How do you know?
- How can your discourse be put to use? What does it hope to accomplish?
- Where have you found an audience who will be interested in your exploration of this issue? How do you know they will be interested? Who might be left out of your discursive performance? Why?
- Have you chosen supporting arguments and evidence that will convince your anticipated audience? How do you know?
- Have you defined any terms that can be understood in ways other than you would like them to be understood?
- Have you sufficiently demonstrated why this issue is good or bad? right or wrong?
- Have you demonstrated why your proposition should be sought out or avoided? is better or worse than the alternatives? is more or less desirable than the alternatives?
- Have you suggested what actions should be taken or avoided?
- Have you considered how your recommendations will change the current state of affairs and what the results may be if the current state of affairs remains unchanged?
- Have you considered for whom your proposition will make things better or worse?
- Have you demonstrated that you are well informed about this issue? Have you demonstrated that you have done the necessary homework/research?
- How have you established your credentials?
- How have you made your discursive performance meaningful?
- Have you demonstrated care when following the discourse conventions of your chosen medium and audience? Explain.

Part II: Audience Assessment (to be completed by the student)

List several of the responses that you received from your audience(s) below. Be sure to describe how you received each response and from whom. Consider these questions:
- Are these the types of responses you expected? Why or why not?
- Based on these responses, what might you do differently next time?
- Have any of your respondents given you an indication of what features of your discourse were particularly persuasive? what features may have distracted from your purpose?
- Did any of your respondents proclaim that you had offered new insights or said something in a way that no one else had said before?
- What meaningful outcomes have resulted from this discursive performance?

Part III: Instructor Assessment

Assess the student's writing as a rhetorical performance. Consider these questions:

- Was this discourse delivered in an appropriate context?
- Has the performer framed the issue carefully as a means of clarifying what is at issue?
- Did this discursive performance accomplish its purpose well or fall short of its objective? Is it persuasive?
- Does this discursive performance appeal to a specific audience?
- Does this discursive performance take a position on a matter open to dispute or explore an issue about which little is known?
- Does this discursive performance demonstrate that the performer has a sound understanding of the issue?
- Does this discursive performance show that the performer can think well in language and take responsibility for the content of his or her discourse?
- Does this discursive performance involve intellectual action or social involvement? Does it go beyond a formal display to accomplish something as well?
- Has the performer examined the rules and conventions of this type of discursive performance? Has he or she either complied with them or tried to renegotiate them?
- Do the words chosen match the theme or content of the discourse?
- Has the performer offered a fitting variety of supporting evidence and appeals? Has he or she given credit where credit is due?
- Are all the parts of the performance consonant with one another and has the performer connected smoothly what follows with what goes before?