

Keynote Address

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*Canadian Society for the Study of Rhetoric (CSSR)
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Disciplining Lady Rhetorica: An Allegorical Dialogue about Disciplinarity and Rhetoric

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Rhetoric, known as the “plastic” art, can and has been conjoined with other areas of study and practice. Perhaps the most well-known statement of this is one of the earliest: Aristotle noted that rhetoric “is not concerned with any special or definite class of subjects” (24). Cheryl Glenn’s work on rhetoric and gender, together with male-centred histories of rhetoric (M.L. Clarke, for example) provide good touchstones for the range of rhetoric’s contacts with other disciplines through history.



Today, rhetoric’s ability to frame the discourse of any particular discipline allows us to create better learning experiences and support student writers in all disciplines; as researchers, it enables us observe, decode, and interpret the discursive practices of a wide range of disciplines (H. Graves). Our actual interactions with people outside of rhetorical studies, however, lead to issues of power and control that cannot be disentangled from the context of each discipline. Collaborative work of the kind Carl Herndl has done with agriculture, for example, leads to what Anthony Pare has called “critical interdisciplinarity” wherein the rhetorician has set up camp (physically as well as mentally) across campus or across town. Pare contrasts this work with what he calls “rhetorical tourism” or the kind of rhetorical analysis that is done from afar or without partnering with an insider in the area under study.

This talk will briefly consider the history of rhetoric's entanglements with other disciplines before dwelling on the more recent dalliances of rhetoric and the humanities—philosophy, communication, literature—as well as encounters with the sciences—mathematics, physics, biology—and the professions—engineering, nursing, and the law. We will adopt and adapt rhetoric's alternate identity as Lady Rhetorica to create an allegorical exchange between her and her long-time companion, Philosophy/Logic, as to the nature of these relationships and what, if anything, is to be done about it.

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Glenn, C. (1997). *Rhetoric retold: Regendering the tradition from antiquity through the renaissance*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Graves, H. (2010). Introduction. In *Interdisciplinarity: Thinking and writing beyond borders*. Eds. H. Graves & R. Graves. Edmonton: Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing.

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In *Interdisciplinarity: Thinking and writing beyond borders*. Eds. H. Graves & R. Graves. Edmonton: Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing.



Heather Graves is Professor of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta, where she teaches academic and technical and business communication. Her research interests include argument in academic discourse, visual rhetoric, and the rhetoric of science. She has published three academic books: *Rhetoric in(to) Science: Style as Invention in Inquiry* in 2005; *Writing Centres, Writing Seminars, Writing Culture: Writing Instruction in Anglo-Canadian Universities* edited with Roger Graves in 2006; and *Interdisciplinarity: Thinking and Writing Beyond Borders* edited with Roger Graves in 2010; and four writing textbooks: *A Strategic Guide to Technical Communication* with Roger Graves in 2007/2012; *The Brief Penguin Handbook (Cdn Eds)* with Lester Faigley and Roger Graves (2008/2011/2014/2016); *The Little Penguin Handbook (Cdn Eds)* with Lester Faigley and Roger Graves (2009/2012/2015); and *Dynamics of Business and Professional Communication: A Case-Based Approach* with Roger Graves (2015).



Roger Graves is Professor in the Department of English and Film Studies, and Associate Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of Alberta. He is the author, co-author, or editor of eight books and 30+ articles, including *Writing Instruction in Canadian Universities*. He is a member of the editorial boards for *College English* and the *IEEE Proceedings on Technical Communication*, and publisher of Inkshed Publications, the

publications initiative of the Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Learning (CASLL/Inkshed). His current research interests include writing assignments across disciplinary fields and the gamification of peer response systems in writing classrooms. Since 2008, he has given over 250 public presentations locally, nationally, and internationally. From 2014-2017 he served on the ISAWR Steering Committee; previously he served on the Executive Committee of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (2010-1202) and of the Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing (2008-2014).