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Many pedagogical issues center around the question, What is the best way to teach a specific subject matter? In some cases, however, scholars debate a more basic question: Is it even possible to teach a particular subject matter through traditional instruction? The debate between process and post-process approaches to pedagogy is one of the latter kind. While process theorists contend that there are some basic suggestions and exercises that teachers can give students to help them through the process of completing a written work, post-process thinkers eschew any authoritative instruction at all—tending to focus instead on dialogue about writing. I have found that process-oriented approaches can be successful at giving students a foundation on which to build and at challenging students to try new techniques. However, a purely process approach can fail to give students a sense of authority and a feeling of relevance to their own work; for these components of writing, a post-process, discussion-oriented pedagogy is needed.

Before discussing the merits and shortfalls of process pedagogy, it will be helpful to give a specific definition of the way in which I will use the word. Indeed, as Breuch points out, various authors have given the term many different meanings (106-09). Some post-process writers have characterized the process approach as, in the words of Erika Lindemann, "what-centered"—that is, teaching rigid, formulaic content of the type found in introductory rhetoric textbooks (Breuch 105). On the other hand, Lindemann reports, process pedagogy was originally intended to refer to a "how-centered" approach, in which students do not just learn the material but actively apply it (Breuch 106). For instance, instead of simply being told to pre-write, write, and post-write according to certain steps, students would actually try out those steps through

reinforcing examples. When I refer to "process pedagogy" in this paper, I mean the latter type—pedagogy in which students actively engage with what they learn.

On the surface, the process approach seems like an effective one to take. After all, good writers do generally seem to undertake certain specific steps in planning their work (Flower and Hayes 66). For instance, experienced writers more than novice writers tend to consider the audience for which they are writing, the way in which they want to portray themselves, and the message they wish to get across (Flower and Hayes 72). There does seem to be, then, at least a basic feature that underlies most good writing. Perhaps the facts that Flower and Hayes present do not capture all, or even most, of what makes a piece of writing good, but they do show that there is at least something to the notion of a definite writing process.

Process pedagogy, then, attempts to encourage students to try out these various habits of good writers—considering their audience, deciding upon the images they want to convey about themselves, and so on. Of course, even if we uncritically accept the results of Flower and Hayes, it's not clear whether the process approach succeeds when applied pedagogically. Clearly good writers make use of the rhetorical-problem strategies that Flower and Hayes outline, but is the reverse also true? Does using those rhetorical-problem strategies make students good writers? From my own experience, I think the answer is "yes," at least to a certain extent. Two particular reasons come immediately to mind.

First of all, process-based instruction gives students a base on which to start, when they would otherwise be paralyzed by lack of direction. For instance, at the beginning of my first AP course in high school—tenth-grade European History—I remember feeling unsure of what to do with the sample AP-test essay prompts that were assigned. I had written very few essays of this type before, so I had little idea how to begin approaching them. Fortunately, both my teacher and

my older sister (who had taken such courses before) were able to give me lessons on how to organize outlines of the material, write introductions and thesis statements, and put together conclusions. After that, I was able to practice outlining and writing essays on my own, and I became quite good at it. Soon, in fact, I was helping others to practice the same skills that I had acquired through this process-pedagogical teaching style.

Perhaps some post-process thinkers would argue that AP-test essays are just mechanical, so that learning to write such an essay is little different from learning the rules of grammar. In either case, they might say, the process is artificially constrained. But isn't that always the case? Don't writers for *Seventeen* magazine also have to meet certain specific—though perhaps different—criteria (Flowers and Hayes 66)? And in any event, the techniques that I developed in writing essays for AP European History have proved useful in later situations.

The second way in which I have found process-based instruction valuable is that it has often forced me to try new things that I wouldn't have pursued voluntarily. My tenth-grade English teacher, for example, regularly assigned exercises in which he required his students to try out new stylistic techniques. One of these assignments was to write a narrative paragraph that conveyed to the reader the emotional state of a character through actions (e.g., "Ted slowly tapped his pencil against his desk and looked up at the clock") instead of explicit declaration (e.g., "Ted felt bored in class"). My eleventh-grade English teacher did something similar. He asked us to identify interesting rhetorical, organizational, and stylistic features of the essays that we read, and then incorporate those features into our own writing pieces. In both of these classes, I was forced to try out different approaches to writing that I wouldn't have explored any other way. And some of them stuck with me; for instance, I used the technique of conveying emotion through action instead of words in my college essay.

Thus, process pedagogy has a lot to offer. But there are times when it can be taken too far—as Lisa Ede notes—"by overzealous" teachers who have "oversimplified and rigidified a complex process" (Breuch 107). An extreme case of this was my sister's twelfth-grade English teacher. For each assignment, the teacher would create an extensive multi-page checklist of requirements, down to details like how many sentences to include in a paragraph and what the paper's first sentence should say. My sister abhorred writing papers for the class; the papers into which she put in the most effort and interest were those on which she received the worst grades (because they were the ones that least followed the teacher's guidelines). At the end of the year, my sister decided that the course had made her hate writing.

Most examples of "overzealous" process pedagogy are probably not this extreme. Nevertheless, they do illustrate where post-process critics are coming from: In its worst forms, "the process paradigm has reduced the writing act to a series of codified phases that can be taught" (Breuch 97). Freire compares this to a "banking" process, in which teachers merely deposit information onto passive students, who "patiently receive, memorize, and repeat" it (Breuch 119). While this is clearly not all that went on during my own interactions with process pedagogy (since my teachers emphasized actively practicing the writing techniques that they taught), Freire's analogy does point out that there is something missing from a purely process-based approach.

What was missing, many post-process thinkers argue, was a chance to become involved with the material in a give-and-take fashion, to treat "writing [as] an activity—an interaction with others" (Breuch 113), and to engage in what Irene Ward calls "'functional dialogism'" about writing (Breuch 103). Among post-process thinkers, there is much debate about how such ideas can be put into practice—and indeed, whether a "post-process pedagogy" is possible at all

(Breuch 97-98). I see two principal ways in which post-process thought can be incorporated alongside existing process-based instruction. The first is for post-process scholarship to be taken "in spirit," as something that guides the ideals of a teacher's activities and assignments. Presumably my sister's twelfth-grade English teacher would not have been so intent on imposing onerous paper requirements if she had recognized that writing is not a thing to be mastered (Breuch 105)—particularly not by following rigid rules. The second method for realizing post-process pedagogy is through what Breuch calls "mentoring"—the act of "spending time and energy in our interactions with students—listening to them, discussing ideas with them, letting them make mistakes, and pointing them in the right direction" (120). Breuch further points out that "Writing centers provide a concrete context for post-process theory because one-to-one interactions are the primary practice of writing center tutors" (120).

One-to-one dialogue offers some of the elements of learning that are missing from purely process-oriented instruction. For one thing, when students take part in a dialogue, they can stand on equal footing with their colleagues or their writing tutor. In a traditional lesson, by contrast, students may feel as though they are not in a position to challenge the material being taught, because it comes from a figure of authority. Even teachers who "seek the same collegial tone as [peers or] tutors" may be perceived as superiors because of the existing power structure of academia and because, at the end of the day, they control student grades (Harris 35-36).

A second advantage of a one-on-one style is that students can receive help specific to their own papers and to themselves. During an ordinary lesson, some students may already be familiar with the material taught, while others may fail to see its importance. But in a discussion that the student himself controls, the student learns and grapples with issues of direct relevance to his paper and to his writing in general. After many of my own one-on-one conversations—

whether about writing or ethics or physics—I have come away with a sense of "Okay, I see that now. I had always wondered about that point, but I had never seen my thought on the topic addressed before." It is in cases like these—when individuals have questions and ideas outside the scope of even the best lectures and practice exercises—that dialogue becomes an essential pedagogical supplement.

From my own experience, the process approach to teaching can be beneficial for student writers. Not only does it give them a starting point from which to practice and refine their skills, but it also introduces them to new models and techniques that they wouldn't encounter on their own. However, process pedagogy can be taken too far and made too restrictive, with baleful consequences for student motivation. Moreover, even the best process instruction can fail to give students feelings of authority and a sense that their learning is relevant directly to them; for this, a discussion- and tutor-based post-process approach is also needed. But as Harris notes, "Writing centers do not and should not repeat the classroom experience [...]. Instead, writing centers provide another, very crucial aspect of what writers need—tutorial interaction" (27). The question, then, is not whether process pedagogy is right or post-process pedagogy is right; both are right in the sense that each contributes something valuable that the other cannot.