

# ENGLISH STUDIES

ENTERING THE DISCIPLINARY CONVERSATIONS



**English Studies entails** humanistic approaches to the study of language and text. Its subfields are diverse and include linguistics, English Education, literature, creative writing, and more. The boundaries that delineate it from other disciplines are ill-defined and capricious, and its name hints at a problematic cultural identity. Yet it centers and engages important conversations and areas of study.

JESSICA KUBIAK

"Literacy Crisis"

Plato's "*Sophist*"

360 B.C.E.

## COMPOSITION + RHETORIC

Since its inception in 19th century American universities, composition has been employed as a means to remediate learners whose command of standard English is seen as deficient. Rhetoric, on the other hand, is a centuries-old foundation of liberal arts education. As a pair, they invite analysis-focused instruction and study.

### LITERACY EDUCATION

I enact a framework of literacy education in my teaching of composition and rhetoric that creates space and opportunity for language acquisition through community-building. I understand literacy learning as a sociocultural endeavor that also involves mastering a set of discrete skills. An enduring question within this area of study is of vital importance to me: how do we strike a balance between empowering learners and honoring their primary discourses?

### WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Writing program work is fraught, for it requires constantly holding competing interests in mind: program budgets and the livelihood of adjunct faculty; standard assessments and academic freedoms; education for citizenry and the business model of higher education. An important topic for WPAs now is marginalized writers and writing programs.

1862

MLA

1883

NCTE

1911

## CRITICAL THEORY

"The critical theorist is aware that the way in which [they see] the world is conditioned, not least by the political and ideological structures of society" (Edgar and Sedgwick). A product of the early 20th century and influenced by Marx, critical theory provides frameworks for analysis that challenge power structures.

### CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Formal education, especially in English Studies, is ripe for critical analysis, between the need to destabilize hierarchies in the classroom, to question "the ruling orthodoxy" of education (Abraham), and to interrogate racist and sexist practices. A related concern that I return to regularly is the extent to which educators should make space for learners to express bigotry.

### MEDIA + TECHNOLOGY

An invisible but pervasive force in our lives and relationships with each other, digital media and technologies have the power to not only amplify our voices, but dictate what we say and how we say it. A consideration of the field, especially as it intersects with critical theory, is whether social media simply reinforces hegemony.

Social Turn

1980s