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2010 RSA Institute
Workshop on Emerging Genres

How do we develop shared recognitions and identifications in a changing world? This question lies at the heart of rhetorical theory and practice, and the concept of genre provides a productive way of addressing it. As ways of acting together, genres constrain and enable, constitute and regulate; indeed, genres link together in systems and ecologies that constitute our social identities, institutions, and cultures.

While genre has been an active area in rhetorical studies in the past 30 years (with studies of oratorical genres such as presidential inaugurals and apologies, as well as of professional and workplace genres such as scientific research articles, employee performance appraisals, and corporate annual reports), it is also a concept that cuts across disciplines and media: it has been discovered or rediscovered by literary and film studies, television and media studies, information science, anthropology, linguistics, and visual studies. Moreover, the new digital media have created a plethora of new opportunities for symbolic action and thus the potential for many new genres.

Thus, we might ask: How do new genres emerge? How do they balance stability with change? How are new genres related to old ones? What are the potentialities and limitations of genre as a concept for understanding material rhetorical practices? Can the same theories that were developed for oral and print genres help us interpret visual and digital genres? This workshop will explore these questions using several cases and examples as well as inviting development of theoretical and critical approaches to new media and practices.

Reading list (*these will be made available to you online; details forthcoming*)

- Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs. 2009. Genre. In *21st Century Communication: A Reference Handbook*, edited by W. F. Eadie. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 1: 257–265.
- Gallagher, Victoria J. 2006. Displaying Race: Cultural Projection and Commemoration. In *Rhetorics of Display*, edited by Lawrence J. Prelli. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press. 177–196.
- Jamieson, Kathleen M. 1975. Antecedent Genre as Rhetorical Constraint. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61: 406–415.
- Miller, Carolyn R., and Dawn Shepherd. 2009. Questions for Genre Theory from the Blogosphere. In *Genres in the Internet: Issues in the Theory of Genre*, edited by J. Giltrow and D. Stein. Amsterdam: John Benjamins: 263–290.
- Schryer, Catherine F. 2002. Genre and Power: A Chronotopic Analysis. In *The Rhetoric and Ideology of Genre: Strategies for Stability and Change*, edited by R. Coe, L. Lingard and T. Teslenko. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press: 73–102.
- Shepherd, Michael, and Carolyn Watters. 1998. The Evolution of Cybergenres. In *31st Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, edited by R. H. Sprague, Jr. Maui: IEEE Computer Society Press.

For reference, we recommend the following, if you have time:

Bawarshi, Anis S., and Mary Jo Reiff. 2010. *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy*. Edited by C. Bazerman, *Reference Guides to Rhetoric and Composition*. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press. Available at http://wac.colostate.edu/books/bawarshi_reiff/. See especially chapters 7, 8, and 9 in Part 2: Genre Research in Multiple Contexts.

Agenda

Friday afternoon

Introductions and orientation to the workshop.

Vicki and Carolyn will each give a brief introduction to her own perspective on genre and connect to the common readings.

General discussion about participants' interests in and previous work in genre studies, with connection to the common readings.

Break into groups for discussion of the following key questions:

1. How and why and also when do genres emerge, change, evolve, proliferate, hybridize, blur, die? Should there be a general model for understanding these processes?
2. What is the relationship between genre and tradition, including public memory?
3. What is the relationship between genre and medium?
4. What is the cross-disciplinary potential of genre and genre scholarship? What different perspectives on genre do we gain from rhetorical studies, literary studies, film and media studies, anthropology and folklore, sociology, information science, etc.?

Share insights from each group with the entire workshop.

Saturday

Individual presentations of research in progress, 8 in the morning, 8 in the afternoon, about 20 minutes each. Please be prepared to talk through your project for about 10 minutes and to contribute to about 10 minutes of discussion for each project. We request that you send us a project description or abstract of no more than 2 pages by June 1 that we can share with the other workshop participants (this can be simply a modified version of your application statement). We'll ensure that these are distributed to all participants.

Sunday morning

Break into groups to reconsider the key questions from Friday in light of the research presentations and discussion on Saturday.

Develop collective summary and discussion of future research questions and directions.