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Statement of Teaching and Research Philosophy

As citizens, we are thrown among strangers, strangers with whom we may share little in common. One enduring characteristic of civic life is thus disagreement, often deep disagreement. How can people who disagree so deeply nevertheless manage to talk together? This is my central question.

My work to answer it cuts synergistically across the categories of teaching, research and service; I'm therefore organizing this Statement in line with the Faculty Handbook §5.2.3.2, qualifications for tenure, with sections on Excellence in Scholarship (research and scholarship of teaching and learning), Effectiveness in Teaching, and Satisfactory Institutional Service. Although I am in only my fourth year here at ISU, under current LAS policy my case should be viewed "as if" I had been hired six years ago (see the policy confirmation in I1). I am therefore going to discuss work that I accomplished in the two years before coming to ISU. Parenthetical references are to folders in the accompanying Portfolios.

1. Excellence in the scholarship of research and teaching.

1.1. Toward a general theory of the "disagreeable" process of civic deliberation.

In the last twenty years, interest in deliberation—the talk through which civic decisions are made—has blossomed in a variety of fields. Scholars following Dewey, Habermas, Popper and others have articulated theories of deliberative democracy, elaborating the idea that our political institutions and policies are legitimate precisely because they spring from and make room for this special kind of talk. We are free, these theorists argue, and our decisions are correct, because we speak freely and decide, reasoning together.

But what is this "deliberation"? Despite the centrality of the term in disciplines ranging from law and political philosophy to discourse analysis and communication, few have paid close attention to the details of deliberative talk. Instead, theorists of deliberation have implicitly (and therefore without much testing) adopted what I will call an Optimistic view. In this view, deliberation is seen as having the ultimate goal of resolving disputes rationally. Individual citizens are obliged to cooperate with each other in pursuit of this noble goal. The norms of deliberation—conceived of in particular as norms for reason-giving or argument—are the specific rules or practices that citizens must follow in order to do so.

Now, the Optimistic view is remarkable in part because of its conspicuous conflict with ordinary views of deliberation, and especially of argumentation in civic life. We argue together because we disagree; our arguments are sometimes angry, often frustratingly unproductive—in short, disagreeable. The Optimistic view conflicts also with the perspective on civic life traditional within my field, rhetoric, since classical times. The rhetorical tradition has always been willing to engage what Kenneth Burke called the "barnyard" aspects of civic life: noisy, messy, smelly, yet fecund.

In my primary research project, I aim to develop an alternative theory of civic argumentation, one that grows out of these ordinary and rhetorical perspectives while at the same time proposing robust norms for collective deliberation. I want to put disagreement first. I want to explain how deliberation can occur even when citizens do not share common goals; to explain

how citizens can act so as to earn the attention and cooperation of their fellows; to explain how norms structuring interaction can be established even when they are not agreed upon in advance.

I've advanced this project in seven articles/book chapters, two invited talks, three non-refereed print publications and over a dozen conference papers. I have proceeded along three lines: critical, constructive and practical. In the first line, I clear the ground by articulating and defending a series of critiques of the Optimistic view. Civic argumentation (I have argued) does not aim at rational dispute resolution (R24); in fact, it may not aim at any goal or function at all (R8). Further, even if it does, individuals are not obliged to cooperate to achieve that goal (R8), and they demonstrably do not expect or offer cooperation in actual practice (R18).

In the second line, I undertake the more significant task of actually constructing a non-Optimistic theory of deliberation. I have proceeded in part through case studies of the U.S. Congressional Debate over the first Gulf War and of the O.J. Simpson trial; I have also drawn from theorists in the rhetorical tradition, especially the work of Henry W. Johnstone (R17). Throughout, I emphasize the rhetorical craft of individuals in inventing, creating, *designing* the conditions under which their arguments can proceed (see the general overview in R10). Instead of imposing norms from above, in this, the Design view participants in civic argumentation undertake to follow norms as a matter of strategy, in order to achieve their own "disagreeable" ends.

For example, it is obvious that arguers need firm starting points from which to proceed; otherwise arguments regress indefinitely. The Optimistic view presumes that arguers will cooperate in locating premises with which they both agree. I have demonstrated how in contrast arguers can construct (design) premises that their opponents will be forced to accept (R7, R11). Similarly, it is obvious that there needs to be a central issue that all arguers are addressing; otherwise their exchange will become disjointed. The Optimistic view presumes that issues arise naturally whenever people disagree, and that everyone is obliged to try to resolve them. I have demonstrated how in contrast arguers have the communicative resources to *make* issues that will demand their opponents' attention (R14).

My third line of activity in this project has been practical: to gather together and talk with colleagues from among the physically and disciplinarily scattered community of scholars interested in argumentation. To do this, I have served as organizer, panelist, respondent or chair at a series of conferences or meetings to discuss the general agenda for argumentation studies and to explore specific issues that arise at the intersections of the relevant disciplines (R23, R15).

These efforts have helped make the Design approach widely recognized within the transdisciplinary field of argumentation studies, as is suggested by the number of *festschrift* and journal invitations I have been receiving in the past two years. But the topic of disagreement and deliberation is one that should demand attention from a wider audience; I look forward to gathering the threads of this project together into a book, relatively soon (R1).

1.2 Civic dignity as a rhetorical resource.

Where my primary research project focuses on how those who disagree can talk together, this second project examines what they have to say to each other. It arose first out of my dissertation work on Cicero. In ancient Rome, *dignitas*—dignity or "civic face"—was both the highest reward of the political life and a major source for rhetorical appeals. In my post-dissertation work, I have continued to study how dignity is rhetorically effective: how citizens

can be moved to earn and pay respect, even across ideological boundaries. In one article, I have examined how citizens can be called to gain dignity by doing great deeds (R20). I have also looked at the inverse situation: how a person who already possesses great dignity can deploy this authority in discourse. I followed up an early paper establishing a general typology of authority (R25) with an analysis of what I call the "authority of dignity" (R16). In response to an invitation for a *festschrift* volume, I am currently preparing the next step in this project, in which I will argue that some of the deference paid to experts in our public discourse is in fact an appeal to just this sort of "authority of dignity" (R2).

1.3 The next step: Irreconcilable controversies in agricultural/food policy.

Within the next year I plan to open a new line of research into the increasingly strident contemporary debates over issues in agricultural and food policy. Although I'm not sure where this inquiry will lead, as a first step I look forward to extending my work on appeals to dignity and seeing whether it will provide insights into the ongoing battle over genetically modified crops (GMOs) between organizations like Greenpeace and corporations like Monsanto. This controversy is noteworthy for the way each side has accused the other of being *irrational*. My suspicion is rather that *different* rationalities are in play. One is the familiar rationality of risk-benefit calculations. The other, I believe, may turn out to be the less well understood rationality that underlies our calculations of respect. I hope that articulating the inner logic of Greenpeace's appeals may help us be more clear about what is actually at stake in this debate.

1.4 Student perspectives on argumentation.

I began systematically investigating students' perspectives on argumentation out of curiosity whether bad attitudes toward "disagreeable" argumentation make it more difficult to teach argument skills, either in my own classes or in classes using debate exercises across the curriculum. I was also encouraged by the fact that ISU's forward-thinking policy on promotion and tenure recognizes this sort of work for what it is: scholarship. This project has now produced three articles published or accepted and three invited talks.

In my earliest investigations, I presented evidence that although students do have some negative preconceptions about argument as being angry and frustrating, these co-exist with easily elicited positive and indeed sophisticated views (R6). Further, students are enthusiastic about debates as a way of learning: according to them, it encourages deeper engagement with course ideas and broader understanding of them in terms of their own personal experience (R12, R22).

In the course of these studies I began to notice a provocative synergy between the student views I was uncovering and the theories I have been developing in my main research project. Instead of being concerned with the role of argument in resolving disputes, many students were interested in argument as a way to constitute a public *self*—or as they put it, often eloquently, to gain "self-confidence" (R3, R9). This conception, echoing that of Henry Johnstone (R17), seems to support the Design view's stress on argument as a mode of individual empowerment. I look forward to continuing this line of inquiry with a closer study of "self-confidence" as it emerges in the argumentation classroom.

1.5 In sum: My trajectory.

In my time at ISU I have advanced steadily on the "civic deliberation" project, published occasionally on the "appeals to dignity" project, and have opened the "students' attitudes toward argument" project. As suggested by the table of my main activities that I have included in my portfolio (I1), my trajectory at ISU has continued without break from my previous work.

2. Effectiveness in teaching.

My vocation as a teacher is to help every college student realize his or her *civic voice*. In part, I've inherited this mission from my own outstanding college teachers—a debt I've recently tried to express in a *festschrift* essay for one of them (R3), and which has lured me into participating in a variety of enrichment activities for undergraduates (T1). I am driven also by a sense that inducting young people into the discourse practices of their culture has been *the* task for teachers of rhetoric throughout the tradition's long history. And finally, as an argumentation theorist I find teaching undergraduates highly engaging. The true test of any theory is in its implementation, and in the college classroom I get the chance to implement ideas on the recalcitrant "wetware" provided by hosts of students. So little of what we think we know about argument is of direct use in helping students argue better, and I have learned a lot through these failures.

What is this "civic voice" I'm aiming at? At its core is a set of skills of embodied performance: a student's abilities to stand up and speak her mind in a way that earns the attention and consideration of her fellow citizens.

Surrounding and supporting this core of skills is a layer of theory: the concepts and knowledges about how speech works a student needs to analyze, explain, assess and improve her own and others' rhetorical practice.

And at the outmost layer, surrounding and supporting these two, is a set of affects and attitudes—a philosophy of speech. The student must see herself as joining a spacious world of civic speech, with a long history; recognize and feel the bite of problems in speech ethics as she encounters them; feel the weight of her obligation to participate in civic life; and possess a justified self-confidence in her ability to do so.

As of the end of this semester, I will have taught 14 classes at ISU on eight distinct subjects, all but one of them either new preparations or significant adaptations of prior classes (see T1 for complete details). In some of these, the focus is primarily on just one of the "layers" of rhetoric: Sp Cm 212, the 600-student Public Speaking lecture class, promotes primarily the first layer; Sp Cm 412, Rhetorical Criticism, the second; and Eng 350, Rhetoric & the History of Ideas, the third. Ideally a rhetoric course promotes all three at once, and demonstrates to the student how they support each other. This is what I have tried to achieve in my "signature" class, Sp Cm 322, Argumentation & Debate, as well as in the undergraduate seminar, Eng 489, I organized on the rhetoric of reconciliation after human rights abuse.

Although performance at the level of theory can probably be faked (that is, just put on for the sake of a grade), performance at the levels of skills and philosophy cannot. These, at least, can only be learned if the student invests herself in the learning. My project in the scholarship of teaching and learning has reinforced this idea, since the self-transformation that learning to argue can offer some students is only available if this self is ventured. In order to achieve student

learning on all three levels, I have therefore developed a repertoire of teaching strategies that aim to induce students to take responsibility for their own learning: to take their learning to heart.

In every course I regularly teach, I ask students to take a stand on complex, real-world issues that require use of course skills, knowledges and attitudes to resolve—that is, I use case-based learning (see T3). I invite students to defend their stand before an audience or "public" (T4) that will judge it. I surround them with an environment of the resources they'll need to work on the issues—intellectual resources (readings, website), but even more importantly, the social resources provided by a group of peers (T5). Finally, I insist that they become the primary assessors of their own performance and learning in the course (T6), since, after all, that ability (and not me) is what they can take with them into the rest of their lives.

Encouraging students to take self-assessment seriously, to stay honest I eventually began trying it myself. I've been working on two specific teaching challenges since coming to ISU; I document both in my Teaching Portfolio. First, I've been striving to design grading schemes that students and I can both endorse (T8). Second, I undertook for the first time to manage the students, staff and technologies of a very large lecture class (T9).

Over the past three years, the quantitative evaluations on the standard and my own personal evaluation forms suggests that I have been successful in adapting this repertoire of techniques to the local student culture (T7). My aim is now to maintain the overall course ratings, and to continue to refine the courses I teach to increase their challenge and the student effort they call forth.

3. Satisfactory institutional service.

Even before I came to ISU, it had become obvious to me that I cannot achieve in teaching what I want to achieve, *alone*. I have therefore focused my institutional service in two areas that should generate colleagues: program development and debate across the curriculum.

I am actively participating in the assessment and (I hope) eventual re-design of the rhetoric programs both in the Speech Communication major and in the Rhetorical Studies emphasis within English. After attending Mary Huba's training session in the spring of 2003 as part of the English assessment team, I have been working with colleagues in both programs to construct program goals and assessment measures. In Speech in particular I am responsible for getting the assessment report online (soon). Ideally, the process will help both faculties better coordinate existing strengths and fill in any curricular gaps. I hope in the middle run to help achieve at least one prominent, coherent and high-quality undergraduate major that allows a wide variety of students to develop their civic voices over a series of courses.

I also hope to contribute both to achieving the ISUCom principles and to continuing my scholarship of teaching and learning project by helping faculty throughout the University use debate as a teaching tool in their courses. As documented in my Service Portfolio (S1), I have given a series of presentations to faculty on this topic; I am a member of ISU Team SENCER, promoting the teaching of science through civic engagement and debate; and I have had preliminary discussions with colleagues in Biology, NREM, Agronomy and Sustainable Agriculture about possible debate units or even joint offerings. Together with colleagues in Agronomy, I have put together a study of student attitudes toward a debate exercise already in use (R4). Thus far, most of these efforts have been "networking," but I look forward to the network leading to further specific collaborations.