

English 583 “Composition Theory”—Linguist Stephen Krashen is fond of saying “Theory is your friend.” By this he means that without theory, you can’t tell why something works, or what parts of a pedagogical practice are essential and what parts are not. Theory also helps you develop new ways of seeing, new insights into problems, and new ways of doing things. In this course we will explore the relationships between linguistic, rhetorical, literary, and philosophical theories and composition pedagogy. We will begin with James Berlin’s *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures*, and continue with *A Pedagogy of Possibility* by Kay Halasek, supplemented with selections from *The Bakhtin Reader*. We will then contrast Bakhtin’s dialogic approach with Kenneth Burke’s dramatistic approach in *A Grammar of Motives*. Finally, we will read James Crosswhite’s *The Rhetoric of Reason*, a book in which the author argues for a post-modern, rhetorical logic that can be taught in composition courses. Reading and discussion questions will help students read these somewhat difficult texts. There will be weekly quizzes, a midterm and final, a class presentation, and a seminar paper.

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