

NEGOTIATING THE SACRED IN SECULAR WRITING SPACES:

THE RHETORIC OF RELIGION IN AMERICAN

UNIVERSITY COMPOSITION TEXTBOOKS

by

MYRA LEE SALCEDO

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

May 2014

## Acknowledgements

I thank my family for their perseverance and many sacrifices made during the six years that I lived away from them during this enlightening journey. I am especially grateful to my husband, Andre (Andy), for his reading and editing as well as moving several times to accommodate my on-campus residency. In a role reversal, my daughter, Amanda Salcedo has modeled teaching for me. I regret that my son, Daniel Ramon Salcedo, did not live to see me complete this work as he was a great supporter during some of my more challenging moments, especially during the last few months of his life.

Dr. Tim Richardson, Dr. Jim Warren and Dr. Cedrick May fearlessly asked the provocative questions. At the University of Texas at Arlington I am indebted to Piper Davis, Jackie Gill, Lucinda Channon, Barbara Noyes, Joy Sterrantino and Gretchen Trkay for remaining steadfast way-showers. At UTPB, Dr. Sophia Andres is ever an inspiration and mentor. Dr. Sean Watson is an incredible educator who can make theory wondrous. Dr. Tom Deans threw me a lifeline of research that I built upon and Lynn Z. Bloom contacted me to provide that research. Russell T. McCutcheon, and other scholars, were kind enough to respond to my queries.

March 03, 2014

Abstract

NEGOTIATING THE SACRED IN SECULAR WRITING SPACES:

THE RHETORIC OF RELIGION IN AMERICAN

COMPOSITION TEXTBOOKS

Myra Salcedo, PhD

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2014

Supervising Professor: Tim Richardson

This project demonstrates that religion comes into through the classroom door not only through the embodiment of students and instructors, but via the academy itself through the university composition textbook. Publishers provided lists of top-selling American textbooks that are inventoried and analyzed and mapped along a timeline to indicate the absenting and presenting of religion. A suggested negotiation for the intersections of writing and religion is to view religion as a discourse community as is described by Shannon Carter.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Chapter 1 Religion is Already in the “Readers” (Textbooks).....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Setting religion apart from other discourses.....	8
1.3 Negotiating with the concept of sacred texts.....	12
1.4 Religion is present in university composition textbooks.....	22
1.5 Examining composition textbooks along a timeline.....	33
1.6 Timeline: Context as an afterthought.....	36
1.7 Addressing religion as a discourse.....	51
1.8 The twenty-first century religion: Now You See It, Now You Don’t.....	56
1.9 Conclusion.....	63
Chapter 2 Religion is Already in the Readers—Teachers and Students.....	67
2.1 Introduction.....	67
2.2 Religion is not marginalized in composition textbooks.....	68
2.3 Textbook editors present readers through a Christian lens.....	77
2.4 Religion is formulated in identity constructions.....	82
2.5 Instructors encourage inviting religion into the classroom.....	91
2.6 Inquiry confronts affirmation in academic discussion of religion.....	103
2.7 Some scholars announce their faith in their published works.....	106
2.8 Conclusion.....	116

Chapter 3 The Call for Religious Literacy in the Classroom.....	127
3.1 Public media is tied to religion in textbooks, especially after 9-11.....	127
3.2 Textbook editors include articles of religion from the public sphere....	133
3.3 Scholars call for religious literacy in the university classroom.....	140
3.4 Why religion is being addressed.....	146
3.5 The classroom as public sphere.....	149
3.6 Negotiating with religion.....	151
3.7 Religion, treading lightly due to the United States Constitution.....	153
3.8 Conclusion.....	163
Chapter 4 Negotiating Religion in the Secular Writing Classroom.....	165
4.1 Introduction.....	165
4.2 Religious literacy as a social practice.....	169
4.3 Negotiating with religious discourse.....	171
4.4 Conclusion.....	199
Works Cited.....	207
Biographical Information.....	222

## Chapter 1

### Religion is Already in the “Readers” (Textbooks)

#### 1.1 Introduction

“How typical of our times to regard ‘values’ as universal and belief as contingent. We’d better hope there is no God!” (Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz 1997 191). Are values universal? And is belief contingent? Does this commentary questioning a correlation with an existence in God belong in a secular university? And does implying that the questioning of values and belief indeed make one a non-believer in God? Is the writer stating that we better hope there is no God to admonish our questioning? And do any of these questions belong in a secular first-year university writing classroom? Editorializing about an essay on non-belief in an American writing textbook to the point of exclaiming “We better hope there is no God!” is a strong implication. It might not be surprising to hear such statements made in a religious studies course, or in a theology classroom. However, these statements are directed to the university first-year writing student in a textbook destined for all universities across the country, not just those institutions that are affiliated with religion. The aforementioned questions were asked in two editions of a textbook on composition (not literature) in an editorial annotation with the signature of John J. Ruszkiewicz in *The Presence of Others: Voices and Images That Call for Response* (Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz 1997, 2004). In fact, the questions were written as an editorial note alerting students to the fact that a reading in a textbook was non-

affirming of belief. Only two articles in *The Presence of Others* in a chapter on religion that were non-affirming of belief in a deity were annotated with similar remarks by the textbook editors. Readings that *did* affirm belief in a religion were devoid of annotations of the paragraph-by-paragraph editorializing.

In the 1997 edition of *The Presence of Others* (second edition) is the full chapter “What We Believe,” with eleven articles addressing religion. Nine of the “readers” express an affirmation of belief, including a reading endorsing the Pope, a Hasidic tale, and excerpts from texts perceived as “sacred,” such as the Qur’an and the Bible. That a writing textbook would declare support of faith and belief in any religion might be unexpected in a secular classroom. In addition, religion is included in the top sixteen composition textbooks selected by publishers as best-selling from 1990 to 2012. *The Presence of Others* is one of these titles. The top sixteen titles (in all of their editions) comprise a potential of one-hundred-and-seventeen books (if all editions of each textbook are examined from the 1970s to 2012). The fifty-nine books analyzed in this project (spanning the earliest and most recent editions of each title in this group—with a concentration from 1990-2012) contain five-hundred-and-two texts and images that address religion. Only sixty-six (thirteen percent) of the essays with a focus on religion address perspectives on doubt, non-belief, or secular stances. Yet these books are all intended for the secular university writing classroom. How is it that the allegedly secular textbooks include issues involving the religious realm for writing classroom engagement to the point of asking students to narrate an

experience with prayer as a writing exercise (Lunsford *The Presence of Others Readings for Critical Thinking and Writing* 1994 207)?

In 1999, Lynn Z. Bloom estimated that there were 2.2 million first-year college students reading anthologies in composition textbooks that she referred to as a “teaching canon” (“The Essay Canon” 401). Bloom analyzes a database compiled from the half-century of composition textbooks that were developed following World War II, noting that “the empirically defined canon” was “formed by diverse post-World War II composition teachers, acting independently or in collaboration with publishers” (402). She examines a database of anthologies catalogued over the fifty-year period from 1946-1996 (407) and states the importance of Readers (capitalized to denote texts in the books and to distinguish from those who read them). She especially focuses on essays in the writing classroom, and states “Students in the nation’s three thousand or so colleges and universities, even those who never meet a literature anthology, are almost sure to encounter essays in their required composition courses—most likely in Readers” (404).

Bloom defines “essay” loosely, and allows that it is often a catch-all term for “*selections, pieces, readings, materials, prose models*” (405 *emphasis hers*). In some cases, Readers that I have examined include prayers, oral histories, speeches, poems, sermons, and excerpts from texts deemed sacred. My research indicates that readers are likely to encounter religion in the textbooks through the various materials or articles that comprise the books. Bloom estimates that there are “two-hundred



composition anthologies on the market in any given year, which collectively publish about thirteen thousand essays” (“Once More to the Essay Canon” 94). My research indicates that religion is present in many of these composition textbooks that contain essays or readers. In fact, one of the top sixteen titles is Lee A. Jacobus’ *World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers*. The eighth edition (2010) was required reading for all Spring 2013 English 1302 students in the English Department of The University of Texas of the Permian Basin in Odessa, Texas. Required readings included Lao-Tzu’s “Thoughts from the Tao-te Ching” (21) located in a chapter on Government, and Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (211) located in a chapter on Justice. With Asian students and Christian fundamentalist students enrolled in my online classroom, issues of religious perspectives were brought up in argument paper proposals, especially due to these two readings. This is addressed in detail in Chapter Four when discussing the negotiation of such topics that refer to religious faiths in the secular classroom. This textbook (in its newer ninth edition) was required in the fall 2013 semester at UT Permian Basin, and has been in place in various editions for eight years. In speaking primarily of literature anthologies, Di Leo states: “Departments and institutions often fall into habits of uncritical acceptance of particular anthologies as the benchmark for what should be taught in courses. Anthology critics call upon us to question that trust or at least to understand better the conditions upon which it has been accepted” (*On Anthologies* 2). In the case of UT Permian Basin, the 1302

course and required texts are evaluated and fine-tuned each semester, and value is assigned to the *World of Ideas* textbook for containing entire essays and works rather than excerpts. *World of Ideas* is among the textbooks included in the “Canonical Readers that Provide the Database for ‘The Essay Canon’” that Bloom analyzes (“The Essay Canon” 425). The textbook is the only one in the top sixteen textbook titles examined here that contains King’s letter in its entirety rather than an excerpt. This is significant, as King’s letter ranks high in the number of reprints in fifty years (50 reprints), while King as an author ranks number eight in the top fifty reprinted authors (“The Essay Canon” 426). His “I Have a Dream” speech was reprinted sixty-eight times during the fifty years of composition anthologies that Bloom explores (ibid). Nonetheless, no matter the frequency of encounters, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” is challenging for instructors at UTPB due to its enmeshment with religion. This is also addressed in more detail in Chapter Four.

Although the focus of my research is largely on the top sixteen titles from 1990 to 2012, some of the research is extended through the various editions from the 1960s onward. This is necessary to trace when religion was included and subsequently excluded over the decades, a concept that is addressed later. One textbook of interest in this study of the top titles is *Perspectives on Contemporary Issues: Readings Across the Disciplines* (Ackley 2000). The very first essay in this composition textbook is Robert N. Sollod’s “The Hollow Curriculum.” Sollod asserts that the predominant university multicultural curriculum embracing race and

gender issues is negligent in that it often excludes “the religious and spiritually based concepts of reality that are the backbone upon which entire cultures have been based” (12). The editor of *Perspectives on Contemporary Issues* lends credibility to this argument by including Sollod’s 1992 essay in the textbook in five editions (from the second edition in 2000 through the sixth edition in 2012). Bloom states, “A literary work gains value, as Smith explains, through repeated ‘inclusion,’” in anthologies (“The Essay Canon” 403). Speaking on religion, Sollod states: “Omitting this major facet of human experience and thought contributes to a continuing shallowness and imbalance in much of university life today” (Ibid.).

If the prevalence of images and texts that address religion in these secular textbooks in this study is any indication, many editors and publishers of the top sixteen mass-produced American public university composition textbooks must agree with Sollod in that religion is important to university life. In these top composition textbooks, indicated as best sellers by publishers, there are numerous articles on religion and references to the divine. *Perspectives on Contemporary Issues* is among these titles. There is much scholarship calling for inclusion of religion issues in the writing classroom (which is addressed in depth in Chapter Two), but seldom are textbooks mentioned that already contain these readings, especially those that contain “readings” or texts that should be intended to invite inquiry and questioning, necessary strategies for students to develop a researched argument position paper in the composition classroom. Rather, these textbooks tend

to invite affirmation of belief or “faith” as the term commonly used, and often provide no contextual materials for inquiry. Instead, faith and belief often go without saying, *or* these concepts are affirmed through the rhetoric of editorial apparatus such as introductions, footnotes, and response questions.

Addressing literature anthologies, Laurie Finke writes, in “The Hidden Curriculum,” that such editorial materials as headnotes can contain “a hidden curriculum” (395). It is possible that there is a rhetoric or element of persuasive curriculum in various editorial notes. Finke describes the anthology genre as often containing “tables of contents, headnotes, footnotes, biographies, excerpts, paraphrases, and summaries” (398). As an anthology editor she states: “These features are not a matter of choice for individual editors [...] A particular editor might choose to deviate from one or more of these features, but in doing so he or she always runs the risk that the form will not be recognized within the genre and the anthology will not sell (Ibid.)” Bloom claims that in her fifty-year study of anthologies in textbooks, there is a problem in “the reductive ways in which editors’ study questions encourage students to read” the texts (“The Essay Canon” 419). This is because the editors have: “embedded a philosophy of reading and writing that encourages students to be passive, obedient, and reverent; they read to unlock the meaning of the text, and write to understand and appreciate its meaning or replicate its matter, mode or manner” (Ibid.). This addresses how the textbooks carry authority with students. But what about students replicating textbook editor Ruskiewicz’s

statement that we better hope there is no God? Or those students who want to write on whether or not God exists due to the textbook editorial annotations? These are questions that I will attempt to answer.

## 1.2 Setting religion apart from other discourses

While some scholars (Chris Anderson, Shannon Carter, Mark Montesano, Lizabeth A. Rand, Duane Roen, and Elizabeth Vander Lei) are attempting to negotiate the intersections of writing and religion for the composition classroom by inviting inquiry, some instructors would disagree with addressing it at all. They insist that the requirements of writing an argument paper cannot be fulfilled if the issue involves religion or its related terms of “faith,” and “belief.” Nonetheless, even though there is no resolution or proposed standard pedagogy for teaching writing on religion in the secular university classroom, religion enters the classroom door not only through the embodiment of students and instructors, or from discourse in the public sphere, it indeed enters the classroom through the academy in the form of some of the top composition textbooks in the country. Of the fifty-nine textbooks analyzed here, all contain articles on religion with some element that can be defined as “the service and worship of a divine being or the supernatural, and commitment and devotion to a religious faith or observance” (Webster), or “the belief in a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods” (Oxford). How should instructors grapple with what Russell T. McCutcheon states is traditionally

described as “a non-quantifiable individual experience, a deep feeling, or immediate consciousness?” (*Critics Not Caretakers* 4).

McCutcheon asks if the category “religion” is one that names “an ontologically distinct referent?” or whether it is “a natural kind necessarily corresponding to something in the so-called real world or merely a heuristic tool?” (“Religion, Ire” 174). Is religion a category that should be set aside from other themes in its own textbook chapter with largely affirming context (as has occurred) or should it be subject to inquiry like other issues in composition textbooks? And if not, then why has it not occurred? How religion is categorized is significant as McCutcheon paraphrases Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss with “systems of classification regulate the conduct of people and ‘make intelligible the relations which exist between things’ ” (“Religion, Ire” 174). McCutcheon suggests such categories as “religion/not religion” and “sacred/secular” serve to define reality and “just what gets to count as ‘reality’” (ibid) or what gets to count as religion, and why. There are even problems with words such as “sacred” which is discussed later.

While all of the sixteen top titles began including various texts and images with a focus on religion before 1990, between the years 1998 to 2008 half of those top textbooks with thematic “readers” began including religion set aside from other topics as its own chapter. This was an attempt to set religion apart from other discourses. Yet by 2012, four of those eight textbooks removed the chapters on religion. One editor (Ruszkiewicz) states that the decision to remove the religion

chapter from *The Presence of Others* was driven by instructors and students avoiding that chapter as being too contentious for engagement (interview 2012). Marcia Stubbs, co-editor with Sylvan Barnet of *The Little, Brown Reader* relates that the chapter “Body and Soul” was removed because: “The users [instructors] of the text reported that they did not use the section because they did not want to introduce questions about or discussions of religion in their discussions or assignments” (Stubbs interview 2012). Questioning religion is problematic when it is perceived as questioning some “truths.” Another editor (Robert Cullen) who included, and later removed a chapter on religion from the textbook *Rereading America*, cites “green studies” as being more timely and relevant to university life than religion. “Whether and how an essay will (or is imagined to) work in the classroom is the overriding concern for including it in a Reader of any type, and for re-assessing its reprinting in subsequent editions,” Bloom explains (“The Essay Canon” 413).

Yet, even with removing some religion chapters, editions of the top sixteen composition textbooks available in 2012 contain one-hundred-and-fifteen images and texts that address religion. What does it mean that editors and publishers began including religion in textbooks intended for the secular classroom from their very first editions? What occurred that editors developed full chapters on religion and later removed them? And how are instructors and students to engage with texts that are often Christian-based, and in some cases include excerpts from texts deemed to

reveal sacred and un-examinable ideas such as those perceived as the word of God in the Bible, or the Qur'an?

First is an example of grappling with an essay that presents an argument based on theological grounds. The second edition of *The New World Reader: Thinking and Writing About the Global Community* (Muller 2008) is a textbook among the top titles in this study. In a cluster of readers on the environment is the chapter "The Fate of the Earth: Can We Preserve the Global Environment?" Texts and images that address the environment come as no surprise when encountered in composition textbooks, especially those textbooks known for clustering readings together into themed sections such as "sustainability." However, it is unexpected to discover the conflicted issues of the public sphere enmeshed with religion. Thus, students and instructors who read Bill McKibben's essay "Driving Global Warming" in *The New World Reader* will encounter the response question:

Argue for or against the proposition that moral and religious considerations should override personal preferences when we make decisions that might affect our environment adversely. (*New World Reader* 463)

First published in *The Christian Century* magazine, the "Driving Global Warming" essay uses biblical analogies to appeal to Christians in order to encourage them to cease driving sport utility vehicles (SUVs). For example, McKibben echoes verses from the Bible, Matthew 25:35-36 "For I was hungered and ye gave me meat [...] Naked and ye clothed me," when he relates the Bay of Bengal rising and causing floods due to warmer temperatures, stating:



If you care about the people in this world living closest to the margins, then you need to do everything in your power to slow the rate at which the planet warms, for they are the most vulnerable. I was naked and you did not clothe me. I was hungry and you drowned me with your Ford Explorer. (461)

In addition, McKibben states: “If we care about creation, if we understand the blooming earth as an exhibit of what pleases God, then we’ve got to do what we can to slow these massive [environmental] changes” (Ibid.). Thus, an essay on carbon emissions, included amongst other essays on environmental issues, is written from a Christian perspective intended to appeal to a Christian audience, yet is located in a secular university composition textbook. How are students, whether they identify as Christians or with other religions, or no religion at all, to engage with this topic, especially in arguing “what pleases God”? Do instructors have a responsibility to engage in religion topics in the secular classroom since issues of “faith” are already enmeshed with other topics in the public sphere or is it safer to ban religion from the classroom altogether especially in cases of using sacred texts as evidence in an argument paper? And what is the problem with sacred texts?

### 1.3 Negotiating with the concept of sacred texts

Sacred, when used as an adjective, is defined as “connected with God (or the gods) or dedicated to a religious purpose and so deserving of veneration; not secular or profane, but holy” (Merriam-Webster). Religious terms like “sacred” and “holy” by often pointing to ethereal essences that cannot be explained, can be insulated from what McCutcheon would call “historically grounded analysis and critique” (*Critics*

*Not Caretakers* 61). He states: “[...] such phenomenological categories as sacrifice, veneration, gift, worship, and even religion, lack explanatory value” (*Critics Not Caretakers* 63). In other words, these words are often used, and like the usage in the textbooks examined in this project, are produced without definition or scaffolds for examining what McCutcheon describes as “going without say” (“Myths” 201). McCutcheon describes the problems when terms are undefined, just presented. He explains:

[...] whatever descriptive value our categories may have, they generally originate from, and continue to be inscribed within, the vocabulary and belief systems of the groups we study *rather than* the analytic vocabularies of the academy. This suggests that there is an often-undetected self-interest at work insofar as scholars are often participants in the communities they study. (*Critics Not Caretakers* 65 *emphasis original*)

This is because words with divine definitions are set apart from being definable and that the divine essences that they point to are often considered to be beyond questioning for some students.

The trouble with defining terms from a faith-based orientation is that they, in the words of Bronwyn T. Williams, reflect “our deepest-held and least negotiable values” (“The Book and the Truth” 107). Williams identifies himself as a Quaker in two of his scholarly essays (“The Book and the Truth: Faith, Rhetoric, and Cross-Cultural Communication” and “Taken on Faith: Religion and Identity in Writing Classes”). He discusses being “blind-sided by religion” (108) when a Muslim student wrote a paper in favor of banning Salman Rushdie’s book, *The Satanic Verses: A*

*Novel*, and the student advocated recalling the books from bookstores (106). First published in 1988, the novel incorporates magical realism and is inspired by the prophet Muhammad. The student took on the religious aspects of the novel. This was an unexpected topic in a classroom whereby Williams expected all the topics students selected would be secular. In addition, the instructor insists that merely suggesting students reframe an argument for a secular audience is “unethical” in that it sidesteps allowing students to include texts considered sacred into arguments. The student was able to consider some opposing arguments. Nonetheless, the student didn’t find any compromise to his argument and considered his sacred text (the Koran) as “a timeless, authoritative source of original wisdom” (Williams 112) and Williams states that for such students “Anything he might learn in my class or any other would be filtered through and subordinate to the truths he knew from his religion” (Ibid.) a challenge for both students and teachers when it comes to including sacred texts in argument papers that require multiple perspectives and the questioning of perceived “truths.” How to encourage students to negotiate different interpretations is further explored in Chapter Four. Considering religion as a discourse community can help students negotiate the topic of the divine realm, especially by engaging religion with an academic discourse of inquiry.

Douglas Downs in “True Believers: Real Scholars, and Real True Believing Scholars: Discourses of Inquiry and Affirmation in the Composition Classroom,” refers to the conflict of absolutism butting up against examination as a clash between

discourses of affirmation and inquiry (40). As inquiry threatens affirmation, students must question even those texts often perceived as unquestionable. Unfortunately, it can be perceived that Williams's notion of not engaging with other interpretations of sacred texts is actually participating in affirmation—what McCutcheon describes as caretaking of dogmatic ideas. McCutcheon claims the role of the instructor is not to act as a “caretaker” or protector of religious beliefs, but rather the teacher's role “is unflinching to probe beneath the rhetorical window dressings that authorize conceptual and social constructions of our own making” (*Critics Not Caretakers* 141). Students need to recognize and engage with multiple perspectives in the argument paper. This would include more than a single interpretation of a sacred text. Some instructors teaching in faith-based institutions insist there are some absolute truths. Although Don W. King encourages inquiry with his literature students, he states that Christian scholars “will seek to discover truth—about themselves, others, the world, and God—no matter where the search leads.” He then states, in the following sentence: “This means that while some discussions will remain open-ended, other [sic.] will lead toward closure; that is, truth is not always elusive” (“The English Professor as Teacher Scholar” 116). In other words, there will be some absolute truths when teaching from a faith-based stance. This can make argument non-negotiable and is not appropriate in a secular setting.

In some discourse communities like churches and faith-affiliated learning institutions, absolute truths are acceptable. However, in the secular university

students can learn discourse as coded language (which is explored in Chapter Four). Religious discourse can be examined as a code, and Chris Anderson asserts: “Religious rhetoric is the ideal way of examining the assumptions of all discourse [...] because in it the kinds of bias that are present in all language are especially evident” (“Description of an Embarrassment” 22). McCutcheon insists that bias already occurs in religious terms like “sacred” and “holy” as often being considered untouchable once invoked. He states that when scholars of religion employ terms of transcendence a rhetoric of affirmation is used. He insists:

Regardless what its object is called, the conception of religion is an inherently meaningful, nonempirical, uniquely personal experience that transcends historical difference and evades rational explanation is generally shared across a surprisingly large segment of the field today. (*Critics Not Caretakers* 4)

Terms like “sacred,” “holy,” and “faith” that evade rational explanation are accepted by some scholars in the field as self-evident. Nonetheless, students can define these terms along with other coded discourses of particular communities pertaining to the specific issues they select to write about. McCutcheon would state that those who control the definitions and meanings of words and symbols of religion not only classify “who gets to count in this ‘we’,” but also controls “what gets to count as reality” (McCutcheon “Religion, Ire” 175).

What is significant is that the vocabulary of religion is un-examined when it is presented without a context, especially without strategies that invite or encourage inquiry. This occurs in textbook introductions that don’t define the terms, essays,

and texts that don't define the terms, and response questions that affirm that God and gods exist, and assume that students have experienced supernatural experiences. For example, following the essay "The Hollow Curriculum" is the "Personal Response" suggestion: "Describe the degree to which you are spiritual or religious. How important is religion in your life?" (Sollod 15). In addition, when textbook reception drives sales, it is evident from the eight of the sixteen top titles that added chapters of religion, and later removed them, there is a problem for teachers and students in negotiating and examining an issue when religion is set apart from other discourse and no suggested pedagogy is provided.

When terms are not definable, any issue is problematic from the outset. McCutcheon describes definitions as theories in miniature and notes that definitions of religion are "representative" of "one's theory of religion" (*Critics Not Caretakers* 58). The late philosopher and rhetorician Kenneth Burke notes that religious terms and words for the supernatural realm are "borrowed from the realm of our everyday experience" (*Rhetoric of Religion* 7) and "Whether or not there is a realm of the 'supernatural,' there are *words* for it" (Ibid. *emphasis his*). Burke offers an example of the word "spirit" having an original definition as meaning "breath" (8) before it took on supernatural connotations to mean "The non-physical part of a person that is the seat of emotions and character, the soul" (Webster).

Wilfred Cantwell Smith allows that some people believe humans cannot examine or understand the supernatural realm as it is beyond one's "competence"

(*The Meaning and the End* 6). He states:

This argument would have it that in some degree all religions (and not only one's own) deal with what is holy, transcendent, infinite; and that therefore the attempt to subject them to rational analysis, empirical investigation, comparison, and human interpretation is not only impious but vain. (ibid)

Since one cannot study "manifestations," Smith writes that "the objective study of religion leaves out the very part of religion that counts" (*The Meaning and the End* 7). In fact, Smith likens etic study, analyzing a cultural phenomenon from the perspective of one who does not participate in the culture being studied, as an outsider looking inside, as a scientist viewing a goldfish and never approaching the understanding of what it is like to be a goldfish. He decries the "irreverent, even insensitive studies of certain scholars" and states:

Such scholars might uncharitably be compared to flies crawling on the outside of a goldfish bowl, making accurate and complete observations on the fish inside, measuring their scales meticulously, and indeed contributing much to a knowledge of the subject, but never asking themselves, and never finding out, how it feels to be a goldfish (Ibid.).

Conversely, students who do not have backgrounds in religious studies or experience with religious experiences might also be likened to the goldfish attempting to define the flying creatures outside of their habitats. Asking such questions about reflecting on "what pleases God," can render one as Smith's metaphorical fly, especially in a classroom populated with international students from diverse backgrounds, including those with backgrounds of non-belief. Many scholars encouraging writing on the topic of religion in the composition classroom

often identify with faiths, and state their faith affiliations in their scholarship (which is discussed in Chapter Two examining the scholarship in the field, much of it derived from an emic, or insider position).

To engage in religion, students need to be the metaphorical flies on the goldfish bowl, especially if they already know how it feels to be the goldfish, so to speak. Religious terms need to be defined, and multiple perspectives analyzed as well in order to meet the requirements of an argument paper in the composition classroom. What needs to take place is the study rather than the practice of religion. Although McCutcheon, and other proponents of a social-rhetorical study of religion have been accused of trying to “purge the category from indigenous vocabularies,” what is trying to be accomplished is “to become scholars of classification systems and not merely participation in local classification systems” (“Religion, Ire” 176). This entails studying “the history and contemporary use of religion and its role in helping to make possible certain groups’ conceptual and social systems” (Ibid.). In this case, several of the editors and publishers of textbooks participated in local or insider (emic) viewpoints, and the instructors who rejected the textbooks’ religious offerings likely did not feel comfortable with the lack of pedagogy to engage with the materials addressing religion. Some instructors at The University of Texas at Arlington have stated that they lack the pedagogical tools or religious studies expertise needed to engage with students on the subject. At the same time, students may select other topics that professors do not have a specialization in; however, it is



religion that is often the quagmire because of its meanings of transcendence and differing interpretations and definitions. What exactly makes the topic of religion so contentious in a classroom that often deals with various contested topics of the day?

One problem is the authority that is given to sacred texts, especially when they are taken literally. Students may insist on a single definition of infallible truth in a class that requires multiple viewpoints should be examined. Burke cautions that words are double-edged swords with multiple meanings, and viewing them from a single meaning can result in perspectives “that conceal from us the full scope of language as motive” (*Rhetoric of Religion* 10). Considering multiple meanings of words used in the supernatural realm or otherwise is necessary in an environment of inquiry. Analyzing words and terms is the beginning of analyzing perspectives. A freshman writing class English essay evaluation rubric from The University of Texas of Arlington’s 2009 custom textbook outlines one of the requirements in writing a successful researched position paper. Under “Rebuttal: Acknowledgement and consideration of alternative positions” is the description:

The essay indicates an understanding of other positions on the issue and explicates them fairly and accurately. Conceding certain points and/or sympathizing with alternative perspectives, the text offers a direct and thoughtful explanation about why it nonetheless retains its stated position, demonstrating an ability to determine and respond to subtle disagreements within broader arguments. (Wood ixiv.)

While this is just one essay requirement from a single university’s textbook, considering and analyzing more than one perspective of an issue is integral to the first-year writing composition course. Freshman students attending a university often

struggle with engaging in perspectives beyond their own, especially when grappling with viewpoints that challenge their worldviews or identities. This can be problematic if the subject that the student wants to write about is one that doesn't inherently lend itself to inquiry, especially the topic of religion as some students desire to write about the inerrancy of texts they may perceive as sacred. Argument shuts down when some ideas are perceived as absolute truths, what Tamara H. Rosier defines as "truth considered to be universal and valid in all times and places" ("What I Think I Believe" 77). Rosier's article "What I Think I Believe, Using the CHANGE Method to Resolve Cognitive Dissonance" advocates challenging "truths" to result in participating in an environment of inquiry. The academic environment teaches multiplicity, which Peggy Catron defines as "a position where students come to realize there are many different and perhaps valid perspectives that must be examined" ("Blinking in the Sunlight" 68).

Catron, a licensed minister, writes from the additional experience of teaching in a secular university communications classroom. She states that examination of certain ideas is difficult for some students writing on religion who might have "the tendency to view anyone who offers an alternative vantage point as blind to the truth and a moral threat" (ibid). How do students who identify as Christian, with another religion, or no religion at all, write reflectively on issues of religion, or biblically-based discussion questions? And when did composition instructors agree that theologically-grounded arguments were appropriate for the secular writing

classroom, especially in an academic environment of inquiry that requires evidence to support arguments and the questioning of absolute truths in any subject area? In addition, whether or not it is appropriate to include religion in textbooks, it has already transpired. So, how do instructors negotiate religion in the secular composition classroom now that it is here? Religion comes through the door with instructors, students, the public realm, and in textbooks. Is it fair to permit students to read about religion in their textbooks and then insist that they can't write about it?

#### 1.4 Religion is present in university composition textbooks

This study specifically focuses on the presence of religion in secular American university composition textbooks. In addition, it indicates that a rhetoric of religion is revealed through the presence or absence of the apparatuses of response questions or other editorial materials in these textbooks. An absence of context can affirm religious ideas (which I will address later). However, when context is available, it is often viewed through an emic lens. Emic is defined as involving the analysis of cultural phenomena from the perspective of one who is being studied (Webster) what McCutcheon would describe as generated from within a system of belief rather than “the analytic vocabularies of the academy” (*Critics Not Caretakers* 65).

One example of presenting religion from an emic viewpoint occurs in the 1998 fifth edition of Bedford/St. Martin's *A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers*, a composition textbook that includes a chapter on “Faith.” Editor

Lee A. Jacobus first defines faith as “a belief in a higher power or powers that shape human events” (564). He then concludes the introduction for the chapter on “Faith” with: “Some of the attitudes and expressions of faith in this section may seem arbitrary, extreme or even unbelievable. Yet they are the basic materials of an inquiry into the relationship between human beings and the divine” (567). Jacobus writes as if the divine were a given, as if it “goes without saying” for students and instructors. The academic inquiry addressed might be one of deducing the correct pathway to the divine from the religions included in the “Faith” chapter which contains selections from Siddhartha Gautama, The Buddha; “The Sermon on the Mount” from St. Matthew in the New Testament of the Bible; the Hindu poem “Meditation and Knowledge” from The Bhagavad Gita, an excerpt from The Koran attributed to The Prophet Muhammad, “The Raptures of St. Teresa” by St. Teresa of Avila, Friedrich Nietzsche’s “Apollonianism and Dionysianism,” and Martin Buber’s “From I and Thou.” Jacobus presents a textbook published for the secular classroom that suggests students study a relationship between human beings and the divine that may be “arbitrary” or “unbelievable,” yet students need to write papers citing evidence that supports their claims. How can this be negotiated when incorporating perceived sacred texts, especially if some believe the texts should be taken literally in accordance with a single “correct” interpretation? Jacobus allows that he first included a chapter on “faith” in the fifth edition of his textbook due to his own interests (interview 2012). By not addressing how to negotiate religion in the

textbook, Jacobus participates in what McCutcheon would cite as the practice rather than the study of religion and taking on the role of “caretaker” rather than “critic,” the role of critic being “a stance that makes the scholar of religion a critic of cultural practices rather than a caretaker of religious tradition” (back matter *Critics Not Caretakers*). It is significant to note that Jacobus removed the chapter on faith from later *World of Ideas* textbook editions.

However, religions still remain in the 2010 eighth edition of *A World of Ideas*, including excerpts from Lao-Tzu’s “Tao-te Ching” (21), Iris Murdoch’s “Morality and Religion” (729), and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter From Birmingham Jail” (211). Jacobus states that the “Tao-te Ching” is “a basis for Taoism, a religion officially founded by Chang Tao-ling in about A.D. 150” (*World of Ideas* 21). He legitimizes including the reading in the textbook with “However, the Tao-te-Ching is a philosophical document as much about good government as it is about moral behavior” (Ibid.). Some of my Asian students have disagreed with Jacobus in stating that the Tao is their religion and way of life. One of my students in my Spring 2013 English course at The University of Texas of the Permian Basin stated, “I find it unfair that my textbook includes the sacred words from the religion of my grandparents, Taoism, but not my religion, Christianity.” The student laments that excerpts from the Bible are not included in *World of Ideas*, in the 2010 eighth edition of the textbook. In addition, one response question on Murdoch’s text asks: “Is religious faith an accurate indicator of virtue?” Another editorial question asks:

“Should morality follow the ‘rules’ of the Ten Commandments?” (742). Thus, both questions engage in religion, one on faith (belief without evidence) another asking if Christianity is the religion of morality. It is interesting that the Ten Commandments and Christianity are selected as the religion of morality when Murdoch does not equate Christianity with morality in her essay, nor does she mention the Christian tenets of the Ten Commandments in this particular reading. Instead, it is the editor that makes these connections. Nonetheless, students are directed to give preference to Christianity and morality from the editorial context, and to address the Ten Commandments, necessitating the Bible as a source in order to complete a composition assignment. This particular exercise is a reflection of the editor, and not the author of the text, or “reading” in question. It can be perceived that the text is contextualized from an emic stance.

To further explicate that some textbooks present religion from an emic stance, consider the following examples: in the 2000 second edition of Karen Ackley’s composition textbook *Perspectives on Contemporary Issues: Readings Across the Disciplines*, is the response question that posits human souls as a given. Following Robert Bly’s excerpt from his book “Iron John,” is the proposal: “Discuss your understanding of Bly’s theory of the “Wild Man’ and what happens when men do not get in touch with that deeply hidden part of their souls” (68). Students begin with the premise that men have souls and are directed to explore that “deeply hidden part of their souls.” In the 2007 seventh edition of *Rereading America: Cultural*

*Contexts for Critical Writing and Thinking* (Colombo, Cullen and Lisle) is the chapter “One Nation Under God: American Myths of Church and State,” that contains nine essays addressing religion, including one by McKibben: “The Christian Paradox: How a Faithful Nation Gets Jesus Wrong” that asks students how “competing creeds” have “undermined or displaced Jesus’ original teachings” (675) as a prompt for writing. How is it that textbooks intended for the secular composition classroom are asking students to write reflectively on souls, “what pleases God” environmentally, and whether or not Jesus’ original teachings have been undermined? What has occurred that textbooks that include thematic essays known as “readers” address issues of the transcendent along with other issues, such as the environment, gender, relationships, education and government?

A more significant example of essays contextualized with emic materials occurs in the second edition of *The Presence of Others: Voices That Call for a Response* (Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz 1997). The textbook features the chapter “What we Believe, Faith: One Nation under God” that includes eleven essays, and an additional five texts on religion located under other themes. Thus, the textbook contains at least sixteen articles addressing religion. Context materials are affirming. Two of the nine photographs of authors’ faces featured on the front cover of the textbook include Martin Luther King, Jr., and Pope John Paul II. Both of the authors address issues of faith. King’s sermon “Our God is Able” (154) is published as is an

interview with Pope John Paul II (208) that addresses biblical interpretation of the current issues of the time (1997).

Only two of the sixteen texts that address religion in this particular textbook explore issues of non-belief. Both of those texts, the essay “Do Kids Need Religion?” by Anthony Brandt, and Ayn Rand’s fictional piece, “The Soul of the Individualist,” are annotated in the margins with critiques by the editors. For example, one of Ruszkiewicz’s “reader response” annotations in the left margin of Brandt’s essay states: “How typical of our times to regard ‘values’ as universal and belief as contingent. We’d better hope there is no God!” (191). What is an instructor or student to make of editor responses heavily critiquing only the two essays addressing non-belief? The situation sets up non-belief as Burke’s notion of a scapegoat “a device that unifies all those that share the same enemy” (*Language as Symbolic Action* 45). In this case the texts on faith are unified as not needing annotations (clarifications, critiques) in the margins from the editors. There is a continuity of affirmation for the texts on religion, and a discontinuity or divisiveness with the texts addressing non-belief. Thus there is a measure of persuasion at work. In addition, co-editor Ruszkiewicz (who is editor of the textbook with Andrea Lunsford) states in an “Afterwords” of Brandt’s essay that he (the co-editor) was raised in a “strict Catholic tradition” and further states: “I take little solace or intellectual satisfaction in faith represented chiefly as a quest for meaning or selfhood. Religion makes more sense to me if it also deals with timeless, evolving



truths” (193). Ruskiewicz cites some of Brandt’s essay as treating religion with “secular contempt” and alleges “Religion is about hard choices, not easy ones; about truths, not feelings. Questions of faith compel individuals to face the abyss and to confront the responsibility that we have for our own souls” (Ibid.). More than just taking an emic stance, these editorial notes are practically sermonizing to students in a secular textbook.

How much authority a textbook has in persuading students to a particular perspective can be debated, but textbooks are considered to model and encourage critical thinking. Perhaps in the spirit of fairness, the heavily criticized response from an agnostic is included at all. Unfortunately, the critique basically states that Brandt’s essay presents a weak argument “long on questions and short on answers.” Since it is the only non-fiction argument expressing doubt amongst sixteen essays on religion in the textbook, why was a perceived weak article selected? While the selections that express doubt are critiqued, those that express faith are not. An interview with Pope John Paul II is introduced by Ruskiewicz with:

The religious tradition over which John Paul presides as the 263<sup>rd</sup> pope in a line stretching back to Saint Peter recognizes him as the vicar of Christ, his words carrying authority that Americans today invest perhaps only in portions of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. (208)

Ruskiewicz makes some assumptions here without evidence or statistics concerning the thoughts or polls of Americans to support his argument. He concludes the introduction to the essay with:

Religion here is more than awe in the presence of a swelling choir or feelings of solidarity with planetary auras; it is relentless struggle to understand and then act on the imperatives of God, partly revealed and partly mysterious: “Always and everywhere the Gospel will be a challenge to human weakness.” (ibid)

Students are also directed to review Ruskiewicz’s introduction and to “speculate” about implied meanings. An additional essay, “Pope Culture” by George Sim Johnston, is affirming with the Table of Content’s tagline: “The papal chair is now occupied by a man who, along among his contemporaries, has the international stature associated with the generation of Churchill and de Gaulle” (xii). How does a student speculate on the “imperatives of God” or the perceived Biblical authority of the Pope in an argument paper?

In the case of the *Presence of Others*, the first edition (1994) of the textbook was published with the chapter on religion “What We Believe, Faith: One Nation, Under God” that contains eleven essays. Ruskiewicz said he and co-editor Lunsford included religion because “We believed that religion played a significant role in the lives of many students and that ‘What We Believe’ was largely ignored in other college anthologies” (interview 2012). The second edition (1997) of the textbook contained the same chapter with the addition of the Pope John Paul II interview, his portrait on the book cover, the essay “Pope Culture,” and essays on religion expanded from eleven to fourteen from the previous edition. However, by the third edition (2000) of the textbook the title of the chapter on religion was changed from “What We Believe, Faith: One Nation Under God” to “What We Believe, Moralities:

Most Sacred Values.” Thus, the terms “faith” and “God” were removed and replaced with “sacred values.” In addition, essays began addressing morality with only three addressing religious belief. Exchanging the term “faith” for “sacred” still points the chapter toward religion, and essays addressing religion appear under other themes. For example, “A Hope in the Unseen” (588) by Ron Suskind addresses a college student feeling excluded due to his background and religion and is located under “At Home: The Places I Come From.” Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman” (348) is located under “Identities” with the tagline in the Table of Contents: “If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back...” and “The Navaho Way” (433) by Alex Shoumatoff containing the tagline “For us, every day is a thanksgiving day, a prayer in the cycle of life ...” that is also located under the theme of “Identities.” Located under “Science and Technology” is an article discussing religion and science, “The Biological Basis of Morality” by Edward O. Wilson. The articles addressing the Pope have been removed, and King’s sermon “Our God is Able” is replaced with “Letter From Birmingham Jail” (142) located under the “Most Sacred Values” section. My analysis indicates that in the various editions of this textbook, articles addressing religion decreased from fourteen to three from the second to third edition, but are still present in the third edition of the textbook despite the omission of the term “faith.”

By the fourth edition (2004) of *The Presence of Others*, there are only three

articles addressing religion in the “Sacred Values” chapter, but five other essays located under other themes. By the fifth edition (2008), there is no chapter containing a religious term. Instead, Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” is located under “Ethics” (163). (Indeed, tracing the various categories that King’s letter is placed in textbooks is a research task in itself.) In the “Science and Technology” chapter are two articles addressing doubt or alternative perspectives to belief including Bobby Henderson’s “Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster’s Open Letter to the Kansas School Board” (348) that parodies teaching intelligent design. How is it that in the span of five editions of a textbook (over fourteen years) that the presence of religion decreased so markedly that “faith” became “sacred” and then was exchanged for the non-religious term “ethics”? According to Ruskiewicz, changes were made according to the reception, or rather the rejection of the textbook’s presentation of religion. He states: “We were responding to reviewers who told us that they were so uneasy discussing faith and religion in their writing courses that they simply avoided the chapter entirely” (interview 2012). He further explains:

To a great extent, decisions to keep or replace selections in any anthology (after a first edition) are driven by reviewers’ tabulated ratings of individual pieces—that is, whether they have taught a particular selection and whether they have had success with it. I do recall some enthusiastic initial responses to the chapter on “Faith.” But they were outweighed by instructors who, as I have indicated, were reluctant to address the topic in class because they could not predict how students would respond to it or because the subject itself made students uncomfortable. Apparently, while many students have strong beliefs, they do not want their faith to become a topic in a

writing course. Ethical issues such as animal rights, plagiarism, or even divorce are, apparently, less problematic and somehow less personal. (Interview 2012)

Another editor, Jacobus, states that it was the publisher who conducted reviews of his *World of Ideas* textbook, and the results indicated instructors were avoiding the chapter on “faith.” He also surmised students disliked the topic of religion (Interview 2012). In addition to student problems with grappling with a textbook contextualized from an emic lens, instructors certainly engaged with the same problem (which is addressed further in Chapter Two). Bloom, in her article “The Essay Canon,” notes that textbooks must demonstrate a significant change of essays from one edition to another in order to warrant publishing a new edition. She states that:

To justify the publication of a subsequent edition, 25-35 percent of the selections in the previous edition must be replaced, but not necessarily with new works; material from earlier editions may be reinstated, and readings may be imported from the anthologies of others. Publishers solicit reviews of tables of contents from instructors who have used or might use the book, and from a few who have rejected it, but seldom from actual student readers. (417)

So Bloom indicates that it is the instructors who are the gatekeepers of selection and rejection of pieces to be included or excluded from anthologies. While editors rationalize the inclusion and exclusion of topics, especially those of religion, it first is necessary to describe a historical timeline of the textbooks in this study in order to map the inclusion of religion.

### 1.5 Examining composition textbooks along a timeline

To begin to grapple with the inclusion and/or exclusion of religion it is necessary to trace the history of texts addressing religion in these major sixteen titles of composition textbooks. Examining a timeline from the 1970s to 2012 indicates five issues: (1) images and written texts (essays, poems, book excerpts, news articles) that refer to religion are consistently present during this entire time period; (2) Context of the type that provides background information and questions for inquiry is notably absent in the earlier editions; (3) when context is present in later editions it largely affirms belief systems rather than offering an academic pedagogy of inquiry; (4) from 1994 to 2008, eight (fifty percent) of the sixteen titles included a chapter on religion that four of those textbooks later removed—between 2009 and 2012; (5) even with no chapters designated for religion in 2012, images and texts addressing the subject remain in the textbooks located under other themes.

Some of the earliest editions of these sixteen textbooks (those few titles published in the 1970s) contain essays or articles addressing religion from the books' inception. The textbooks emphasized readings that would help students in a search for purpose, meaning, and identity. Often, the search for identity was guided through "multiculturalism," described specifically as race and gender issues following the civil rights movement of the 1960s. By the 1990s, eight of the sixteen (fifty percent) of the textbook titles that I examine included a chapter on religion or faith in at least one edition. By 2010, four of those eight textbooks (fifty percent) removed the

chapters on religion. What is occurring that religion is initially included sporadically, then as a thematic chapter, then removed as a chapter but included once again sporadically (interspersed among various themes)? One constant throughout the history of these books intended for the secular writing classroom is that images and texts addressing religion have consistently been present, in all of the fifty-nine textbooks that I examine during the time period from the 1970s to 2012. Another commonality is that images and texts addressing religion are often interspersed throughout the textbooks under various other themes such as “relationships,” “government,” “science,” and “education.” The textbooks may be analyzed along a timeline to demonstrate the evolution of inclusion and absencing of religion, and the absence or presence of contextualization. Analyzing the contextualization of essays through apparatuses including abstracts, introductions, footnotes, and discussion questions reveals a rhetoric of religion within the textbooks, which I will address later.

First, I will list the textbooks indicated by publishers as being pertinent to the study, and then I will examine their evolution along a temporal timeline. Textbook sales numbers are regarded as proprietary information but lists of the most widely-used textbooks were provided by publishers. The textbooks in this study follow: publisher’s representative David Tatom of Allyn & Bacon/Longman/Prentice Hall, stated that the publishing house’s most popular composition textbooks containing readings are: Selzer’s *Conversations: Readings for Writing*, which has published

eight editions, with the first edition beginning in 1991, and the most recent included in the study that was published in 2012; the Fords' *Dreams and Inward Journeys: A Rhetoric and Reader for Writers* with eight editions between 1993 and 2011; Kirzner's *The Blair Reader* with seven editions between 1991 and 2010; Shrodes's *The Conscious Reader: Readings Past and Present* with twelve editions between 1974 and a 2012; and Stubbs' *The Little, Brown Reader* with twelve editions from 1983 to 2011. Sharon Nobles of Cengage/Wadsworth publishers lists the bestselling readers, with sales of thematic readers only tracked from 2005 to 2011, as Muller's *The New World Reader: Thinking and Writing About the Global Community* (three editions from 2005 to 2011); Ackley's *Perspectives on Contemporary Issues: Readings Across the Disciplines* (six editions from 1999 to 2011); and Miller's *The New Humanities Reader* (four editions from 2000 to 2012). McGraw-Hill publisher David Patterson stated that the premise of the collection of readings gathered with almost no contextual materials (save for an author's name and publication date of each text) in *75 Thematic Readings: An Anthology* in its first and only edition in 2003 is to "anthologize the most frequently assigned selections in themed composition courses" and that it was the most popular reader even in 2011 along with *The McGraw-Hill Reader: Issues Across the Disciplines* (eleven editions from 1982 to 2011). Kyle Koon of Bedford/St. Martin's indicates the most widely used composition readers are Colombo's *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing* with eight editions from 1998 to 2010; Lunsford's *The*



*Presence of Others: Readings for Critical Thinking and Writing* with five editions from 1994-2008; Maasik's *Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers* with seven editions from 1994 to 2011; Jacobus's *A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers* with eight editions from 1983 to 2010; and McQuade's *Seeing & Writing* with four editions from 2000 to 2010. W.W. Norton & Company representative Michael Moss states the company's most popular reader, in its twelfth edition, is Peterson's *The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Nonfiction Prose* with thirteen editions from 1965 to 2012.

#### 1.6 Timeline: Context as an afterthought

Observing these books along a timeline indicates that textbooks began including “readers,” or articles and essays for students to analyze in the mid-1960s. Of these sixteen books, the earliest edition is 1965 of *The Norton Reader* (currently out of print and unavailable). It is the only title in the group that began publication before the 1970s. According to Diamond, religion “found its way back into the American university (xix.)” in the 1970s largely due to new populations resulting from the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act “that opened America as never before to non-European immigration (Ibid.)” as well as the abandonment of university admission quota limits of minorities, and diversity interests following the civil rights movement. Bloom states, that after the fifty-years following World War II, there

[...] was a period of many major changes in higher education; the shift from prewar elitism to postwar democracy—in admissions and ultimately in curriculum; the opening up of community colleges, urban universities, and evening and weekend programs alongside

traditional four-year schools, the expansion of a college education as a right for all—including women, minorities, immigrants, first-generation college students, and the underprepared. (“The Essay Canon” 407).

Despite the changes in the various delivery systems of higher education to a more diverse student body, Bloom found that the essays included the most frequently in composition textbooks remained fairly stable over the fifty-year span. Bloom especially takes note of readers reprinted more than twenty times in some textbooks. She estimates a fifty-year total of 1,750 composition textbooks with readers and about 113,250 essays (or prose materials) published (Ibid.). Thus, she reports on a sample of the textbooks denoting those to be the most influential as those “published in multiple editions, presumably with sufficient course adoptions to warrant continuing publication, and continual revision to ensure adaptation to the market.” This resulted in a group of scholars examining every edition of “any Reader that had been published in four or more editions between 1946 and 1996” (ibid). Bloom notes that publishers will not reveal sales figures (408) and that her sample was about 18.6 percent of the possible 1,750 composition textbooks that fit the criteria of containing readers.

This project is largely focused on those composition textbooks cited as the top sixteen by publishers from 1990 to 2010, although some of those textbooks date back to the 1960s with early editions. This sample and Bloom’s both include *The Norton Reader* which Bloom credits Gordon Sabine with estimating that it is an industry leader selling 1,500,000 copies in the first eight editions—sales

approximating 43,000 copies annually (408). Bloom also lists the top fifty reprinted articles over the fifty-year span including some that address religion including Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (tied for number eight along with his speech "I Have a Dream"). Other articles addressing religion include Maya Angelou's "Graduation" (number sixteen out of the top fifty reprints according to Bloom), and Langston Hughes's "Salvation" (number 28.5) which addresses non-belief; C.S. Lewis's "The Efficacy of Prayer" (number 30.5), and Gilbert Highet's "The Mystery of Zen" (number 37) ("The Essay Canon" 426-428). The database Bloom examines includes 58 titles in 325 volumes (408). She states that the collection "is ultimately destined for the National Archives of Composition and Rhetoric, currently being established at the University of New Hampshire-Durham in conjunction with the University of Rhode Island," and that new electronic versions won't be included (Ibid.). Excerpts from sacred texts don't make Bloom's top fifty reprints list, but I have found that they do exist in textbooks included in her fifty-year time span. They just are not the most often reprinted articles.

One of the earlier textbooks in the top sixteen titles included in this project, and one that Bloom includes in her data according to her list ("The Essay Canon" 425), is the 1977 first edition of *The Little, Brown Reader* (Stubbs and Barnet). It contains six articles addressing religion including a quote from Ecclesiastes in the Bible (470), an excerpt from the chapter of Luke in the Bible (with words attributed to "Christ") (521), and "Two Parables and a Meditation" from the ancient Chinese

philosopher Chuang Tzu in the chapter themed “The Deep Heart’s Core.” A footnote addresses the parable of the prodigal son in Luke with “Christ tells this parable in answer to the Pharisees who blamed him for associating with sinners” (Ibid.). Thus, Jesus is acknowledged as Christ, the messiah, in the footnote. In addition, the 1974 first edition of *The Conscious Reader: Readings Past and Present* (Shrodes, Finestone and Shugue) includes seven essays addressing religion. This textbook was also examined by Bloom. The textbook editors indicate that *The Conscious Reader* was developed for publication in 1974 with an emphasis on “values” and states that “the development of writing skills depends on the heightening of consciousness” (xv). The editors further state: “the readers serve as a catalyst to self-expression” and the “act of writing fosters self-definition” (Ibid.)

Self-expression, expository writing, and searching for meaning and values are the hallmarks of the early composition textbook “readers.” The earliest textbooks embrace the expressionistic perspective that situates knowledge in human consciousness (imagination) (Nystrand et al. 269). The editors of the 1977 first edition of *The Little, Brown Reader* write that the “readers” were selected to “enable” students to reflect on experiences including “the experiences of estrangement and alienation; the memories, passions, rituals, and myths that shape or embody our personal values, our identities, and our being” (v.). The process of writing, according to these texts was largely inner-directed. Religion is interwoven in the textbooks. Even a few paragraphs about what constitutes a family in *The Little,*

*Brown Reader* are followed by the question “Can you give examples of ‘moral, legal, economic, *religious*, and social rights and obligations’ that unite a family?” (*emphasis mine*). So, in this case, the religious is incorporated as an identity marker.

Continuing along the timeline, the articles on religion in the earliest editions (1960s to 1970s) of these textbooks in this project range from the traditional inclusion of Martin Luther King Junior’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” in Shrodes’s first edition of *The Conscious Reader* (1974) to the more unique “What is Zen?” by D.T. Suzuki in the 1977 first edition of *The Little, Brown Reader* (Stubbs and Barnett) that is located under the theme “teaching and learning.” Bloom indicates that King’s “Letter From Birmingham Jail” ranked eighth in the top fifty reprints over a fifty-year time span (“The Essay Canon” 426). In *The Conscious Reader*, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” is located under the theme “Freedom and Human Dignity,” along with other selections that address religion or contain arguments along theological grounds including E.M. Forster’s essay “Jew Consciousness,” and Jean Paul-Sartre’s “Anti-Semite and Jew.” King’s “Letter” is a letter written from his standpoint as a minister to eight “fellow Clergymen” (537). Both Forster’s and Sartre’s works address anti-Semitism. All three texts address religion, and all three are located under the theme of “Freedom and Human Dignity.”

According to the forward of *The Conscious Reader*, the development of the reader was a response to a need to teach “values” (xv.). The editors claim that the texts were chosen: “[...] believing that the development of writing skills depends on

the heightening of consciousness, the editors of *The Conscious Reader* invite the imaginative examination of possible and probable futures of man and society” (Ibid.). The readings are intended to serve as a “catalyst to self-expression” and the editors explain that “the act of writing fosters self-definition” (Ibid.) and the process involves reflection “As awareness is extended by reading, we may become increasingly conscious of the reservoir of memories and experiences from which to draw” (Ibid.). Also published in the 1970s, *The Little, Brown Reader* (first edition, 1977) emphasizes values, with a large focus on valuing multicultural ideas, especially inclusion of race and gender as topics of essays, and through authorship of the selected essays. While the editors bring up race and gender as relevant issues, religion is not mentioned as part of the multicultural focus. Nonetheless, religion is present in these textbooks as an identity marker.

The word “values” had yet to take on the connotations of being a religious code word as it would later in the 1990s when “family values” became a phrase appropriated by Dan Quayle and Pat Robertson at the 1992 Republican Party Convention (Stone 69). Lawrence Stone, in “Family Values in a Historical Perspective,” states that from the 1980s to 1992, “family values” was “softened” to the phrase “traditional values” and became: “a code word for opposition to abortion and homosexual rights in particular, as well as to the drug culture and changing moral standards about sexual behavior in general” and by the code word “values” Stone claims Robertson “summoned his Christian followers” (Ibid.). In these early

composition textbooks, however, “values” are more significant as being related to what the individual upholds socially and culturally as textbooks expanded their themes into various civic issues of the time periods in which they were published, largely during the civil rights era with a focus on race and gender. The term “values” had not yet become aligned with the many civic issues that it signifies in the later twentieth century and early twenty-first century.

Another textbook published in the 1970s addresses multiculturalism specifically as focusing on ethnicity and gender without addressing that some religions are enmeshed with ethnicity and culture (a concept explored further in Chapter Three). The editors of the 1973 third edition of *The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Expository Prose* state that due to “advice from the field” (xix.) including instructors who used the second edition of the textbook, that two-hundred and twenty-five pages were cut from the second to the third edition. At the same time, new works replaced previous texts in order to provide “a marked increase in material by women and black authors” (Ibid.) (Eastman, Arthur et al.). Not mentioned is that the textbook is rife with essays that address religion. *The Norton Reader* contains King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (660) under the theme of “Politics and Government” along with William Blake’s “Proverbs from Hell” (788), and W.E.B. Du Bois’ “Jacob and Esau” (640) that examines Old Testament stories. In addition, the textbook contains “Zen Parables” (1080), “The Book of Samuel” (1071), and an excerpt from the New Testament (excerpted from the Chapter of

Matthew 1073) under the heading “Parables” sandwiched in between the Science and Religion chapters. In total, the 1973 *Norton Reader* contains eighteen texts on religion in a full chapter on religion, and thirteen more articles addressing religion under various other themes—thus resulting in thirty-one selections addressing transcendent ideas. The religion chapter includes Jonathan Edwards’ sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (1102), often found in early American literature textbooks. The questions that follow the sermon do direct students to read all of Deuteronomy in the Bible (1107), and there is a sermon also by Gerald Manley Hopkins (1094) with a follow-up question directing students to read Genesis in the Bible. There is no introduction to the religion chapter, and in many cases, no discussion questions. Brief author biographies are listed on a few pages in the back of the textbook. Why is there a lack of context and pedagogical direction for readers in these earlier textbooks? According to Nystrand et al., formalism was present as a hallmark of composition during the 1960s (“Where Did Composition Studies Come From” 277) and an element of formalism is that “Texts are properly interpreted only when readers avoid inferences about the writer or context in which the text was written” (“Composition Studies” 278). This may account for the lack of context during this time period.

During the 1970s, cognitive processes of reading and writing gained in popularity over textual criticism according to Nystrand et al. Initially, students were to glean meaning following methods of New Criticism whereby:



[...] teachers and scholars assumed a univocality of text meaning: For any given text, readers sought a stable, singular, and universal core meaning—a public and objective truth—inscribed, as it were in the text itself [...] In this way, explicating a text was analogous to solving a math problem. (Nystrand et al. 275)

Somewhat later reader response elements gained in popularity. “[...] writer assessment during this same period above all standardized reader response and enforced a univocality of text meaning” (Nystrand et al. 276). Writer assessment during the 1970s also emphasized reader response to the text, not the context. According to Nystrand, the reader response theory placed all meaning in the reader whereby meaning “was a dynamic, cognitive event actively constructed and enacted during reading” (283). Aside from the New Criticism and reader response methods, Nystrand allows that the text features were a secondary element in writing. He states “Nonetheless, for most researchers at this time [1970s], the real action in writing was in thinking and shaping purpose through revision in time, not in text features” (Ibid.) This may explain why contextual features were lacking in textbooks.

The way in which the texts on religion are contextualized in these initial textbooks, especially *The Conscious Reader* (1974), demonstrates that context of the issue is not as important to analyze as the texts themselves are fodder for inner reflection. This is because the articles from authors of different countries and centuries such as those by Martin Luther King Jr., E.M. Forster, and Jean-Paul Sartre follow each other without publication dates, biographies of the authors, response questions, or writing prompts. King’s “Letter From Birmingham Jail” has a date on it

by virtue of it being in letter format. There is no context for these articles. Instead, for those so inclined, there are appendices in the back of the book with a couple sentences of biographies for each author in the text and some response questions. No rhetorical situation is provided for readers as they read through the textbook with one essay or book excerpt following another. The rhetorical situation is described by Bitzer as “the context in which speakers and writers create rhetorical discourse” (1). Interestingly, this format of one essay merely following another with no context appears again in the 2003 McGraw-Hill textbook (publishers indicate this textbook was popular through 2011) *75 Thematic Readings: An Anthology*. There are no appendices to peruse in *75 Thematic Readings*. Instead readers are directed to Internet sites. Context is missing according to the front matter “to keep the cost low” (xxviii). The book boasts of being less than half of the price of the traditional textbook because it contains “no headnotes, no questions before or after the selections, no writing assignments, no introduction to the writing process” (ibid). Instead, editorial apparatus are available on a companion web site. Readers are provided with the titles of each text, author’s name and year of publication. Thus, in these two cases, *The Conscious Reader* (1974) and *75 Thematic Readings* (2003), published nearly three decades apart, the text is privileged over the context. The text is given authority over the rhetorical situation of author, audience, exigence and constraints. The text exists as the authority, as is the case in religious texts some deem sacred. All authority lies in what the text relates. Interpretation, and the texts’

location in the social, cultural and political are not given significance, primarily the types of issues that students need to explore in composition. Bitzer insists that it is the situation that calls discourse into existence (2). He states: “Typically the questions which trigger theories of rhetoric focus upon the orator’s method or upon discourse itself, rather than upon the situation which invites the orator’s application of his method and the creation of discourse” (2).

Bitzer attempts to locate rhetoric as situational, in that discourse can carry meaning from the environment in which generates it. Some particular condition invites utterance or writing. There is exigence, a pressing problem that must be attended to. Bitzer states: “Any exigence is an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (6). Sometimes exigence is found in the context of a situation. King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” is a direct response to eight clergymen. Without knowledge of the clergymen’s perspectives and the situation that resulted in King being incarcerated, students’ are left without all aspects of a rhetorical situation, and varying perspectives. This is dependent upon how much of King’s lengthy letter is excerpted. However, a rhetorical situation can be described as a situation determined by rhetoric and rhetoric can create a situation. Vatz would argue that meaning doesn’t reside in events independently of agents of discourse (155). Of course all discourse is constructed, but freshman students without context are left with single perspectives when they are required to consider various perspectives. Textbooks

constructed with little information other than one essay following another are counter-productive for a student expected to engage in inquiry in an academic setting. Vatz quotes Edelman, “language does not mirror an objective ‘reality’ but rather creates it by organizing meaningful perceptions abstracted from a complex, bewildering world” (33). The key words are “meaningful perceptions.” When essays or a text are presented in isolation of context, it models singular perspectives and (in some cases of sermons and excerpts from texts perceived as sacred) absolute ideas for students. This encourages students to rely on their own individual perspectives, and can result in them writing a reflective testimonial or altar call rather than engaging in questioning a text. This is what Anderson describes as resulting in “one of the handful of ‘born again’ papers we get during a term” where “The language is the language of the fundamentalist, of the testimonial, of *Guideposts* magazine and Sunday morning television” (*Description of an Embarrassment* 19). Anderson said he is not as concerned that the language is inappropriate for the academic setting (since it would be appropriate in other settings) as he is concerned with the student’s “authority” that is unaware of other perspectives (20).

Even when students are invited to write a critique, in the case of instructor Juanita Smart assigning a critical paper on Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, a student could compare the fictional monster in the novel to a religious figure. While Smart allows there are “fruitful possibilities” (“Frankenstein or Jesus Christ?” 12), one student focuses on faith-oriented discourse on the “Lord Jesus Christ” and graphic

details of the crucifixion “rather than fulfilling the conventions of literary analogy that the paper had earlier promised” (13) of comparing Jesus’ situation of a betrayal by a master with that of the Frankenstein monster’s betrayal by a master. In “Frankenstein or Jesus Christ? When the Voice of Faith Creates a Monster for the Composition Teacher” Smart states: “I asked for an analytical essay about Frankenstein but received something resembling a sermon instead” (15). This is an example of religion entering the classroom, not through textbooks but through the embodiment of students, something that I explore in depth in Chapter Two.

Another way that religion enters the classroom through textbooks is not mentioned in other scholarship, and that route is via images. Images are largely more prevalent in the later editions of textbooks. In addition to the lack of context for essays in textbooks are instances of lack of context for images that address religion. An example of religious images without definition or context occurs in McQuade’s 2010 fourth edition of *Seeing & Writing*. Images and texts are free-floating of context. In the case of “What Color is Jesus?” essay there are no discussion questions. The writer of the text brings up the question of the race of Jesus (468-469). There are no supplemental materials for the section on race in which the essay appears. This is unusual, as there are discussion questions for other sections in the textbook. Also, in the textbook there are photos of people praying in different body positions, followed by questions asking readers which photos made them the most and least comfortable (80). Some readers are likely to be unfamiliar with some of the

religions in the images depicted, yet the religions are not identified, described, or commented on in any way. One man praying over a meal with his hands folded atop a table in traditional prayer position is wearing a white turban and is identified only by his name, Satnam Waheguru; location (the restaurant “Minar’s Taj Palace” in New York); and the photographer’s name (78-79). A person lying prostrate on the floor of what appears to be a Buddhist temple is identified with “Day of Miracles Ceremony, Land of Medicine Buddha, Soquel, California” (76-77). In another photo (74-75) three people are on their knees in a library with their fingertips and heads touching the floor described solely as “Salat-ul-Zuhr (Noon) Prayers, Mardigan Library, University of Michigan” (74-75). Students and teachers are left guessing. Readers and viewers are not given the religions or context for the prayer rituals. The writing prompts claim each photograph is a “narrative” and “tells the story of how, and in several cases, why the subjects pray” (80). The only photo that answers the “why” question in the caption is one of American baseball players all kneeling on a single knee with the caption “Pregame Prayer, Billy Ryan High School, Denton, Texas” (72-73). Without diverse students in the classroom who can provide background knowledge of particular religions, there is no context in order for writers to compose essays as suggested that develop “a fictional narrative that sets the context for—and leads up to—the scene depicted in the photograph” (80). This is another instance of information provided as self-evident, whereby students are expected to draw on a possible non-existent literacy of world religions as fodder for

writing. When was the moment that composition scholars agreed that textbook editors and publishers should include such images and essays on faith that lack context into mass-marketed textbooks?

The portfolio of four photos of different styles of praying is included in the chapter “Observing the Ordinary,” making religion another identity marker. There is no clue from the table of contents that the textbook includes people praying. The photographs are listed as “Portfolio: Gueorgui Pinkhassov” (the photographer’s name) (xv.). So textbook readers expecting to take a closer examination of the ordinary will encounter people engaged in religious rituals of unaddressed religion in a chapter that also contains photo essays on people’s groceries, a student essay concerning a laptop computer, and Tillie Olsen’s short story “I Stand Here Ironing.” Here religion has been collapsed into other identity and cultural markers. Additional images and essays that address religion are also in unexpected places peppered throughout the textbook. One finds them only by going page-by-page throughout the book. Textbooks without any editorial apparatus or background information foster single perspectives or moments to speculate. Both the absence of instruction and the presence of faith-affirming instruction do not address inquiry in an academic setting. This is especially problematic in the field of religion when only one religious viewpoint is addressed, and the editorial notes (when they do exist) are largely affirming of the religion presented. Imagine, however, the controversy of asking students which photo of people praying makes them the most uncomfortable. What is

uncomfortable is the unknown, something that is further enhanced by the textbook's lack of information concerning the photos.

### 1.7 Addressing religion as a discourse

Many "readers" in the composition textbooks I examine, as well as the textbook apparatuses, leave religion undefined and unaddressed. This is what McCutcheon would describe as self-evident, *sui generis* (*Critics* 10). He describes self-evidencies as not having a history, "and they are not manufactured, instead, they simply appear and proclaim their existence to the senses" (*Critics* 172). Willi Braun agrees and defines *sui generis* as a "one of a kind substance set apart and existing apart from human discourses" (*Religion* 12). Religion isn't alone in being considered as a substance that is often set apart from discourse. Mythology, ideology and even the concept of society tend to take on cultural codes according to Lease (*Ideology* 443). Discourse theory views such concepts as social practices. Tim Murphy describes the construction of society as a discourse. He states:

This strange object we call "society (and the same can be said about "culture," "religion," etc.) is nothing more than an ensemble of discourses, or discursive articulations. "Society," in other words, is not a substance which subsists under or behind particular manifestations; it is simply the ongoing practice of its various and multiple articulations. (*Discourse* 401)

Murphy alleges that society constructs the concept of society and that it is always a "shifting ensemble of discourses" (*Ibid.*). In addition, McCutcheon, in scrutinizing words and definitions, would exchange the word "society" for "social formations" to emphasize the human element in forming the social realm and how



such formation is continually emerging and shifting (*Critics* 25) through rhetorical acts. Thus, the type of rhetorical acts McCutcheon would apply would be to examine how such religious terms exist, their definition, and function for those groups who employ the terms rather than focusing on “what the category ‘religion’ or ‘sacred’ really ought to mean or what it actually refers to” (“Religion, Ire” 178). Instead of worrying about what might “please God” from the “Global Warming” article students are better served by the questions directing their attention to the vocabularies used in the text (in this case Christian-focused) and how the text was written to appeal to the Christian audience. The textbook editor engaged in these strategies with the response questions and even asks if the Christian worldview encouraged in the article had relevance to the students’ belief systems. Such questions offer opportunities for questioning the Christian reading in a secular classroom. However, instructors are likely to still grapple with students wanting to write on “what pleases God” environmentally or other such elements of the text.

Dena Warren, who teaches philosophy and a “Philosophy of Religion” course, argues that religion can be taught from a philosophical stance due to “philosophy’s fixation on *how* people think and in its relative disregard for *what* specific beliefs they [students] hold” (“Philosophy and Religious Disagreements” 135 *emphasis original*). This dovetails with McCutcheon’s notion of concentrating on social-rhetorical acts, not what one believes or if one belief is superior over another, but rather how those beliefs function in a society or in an argument. Ideally, textbooks

would offer essays in a point/counter-point fashion presenting conflicting viewpoints, or at least editorial materials such as questions and writing prompts that call for examining the perspectives included in the textbooks. Textbooks aren't solely responsible for containing scaffolding for inquiry or multiple viewpoints. Students can and should be directed to engage in further research. However, the textbooks too often neglect modeling the concept of multiple viewpoints existing. That being said, textbooks did begin presenting a greater diversity of religions in the 1980s.

Continuing to address the timeline, the 1970s textbooks in this sampling published few articles addressing religion with the exception of *The Norton Reader* and its thirty-one selections, some of those essays included in a chapter on religion. In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a push to include more women and minority issues in the texts, and those groups as authors are prevalent. The textbooks in the 1980s contain a handful of essays addressing religion including Adrienne Rich's "Split at the Root: An Essay of Jewish Identity" under the theme of "Justice for All: The Problem of Equality" in *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing* (Colombo 1989). This textbook, with only three essays addressing religion, would expand the subject of religion into an entire chapter in 2007. But the 1980s were a decade dedicated to including minorities and women. Editor Jacobus notes that he doubled the number of texts written by women for his 1986 edition of *A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers*. This edition contains four

articles addressing religion including Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" under the theme "Ideas in the World of Politics" and Paul Tillich's "Symbols of Faith," described by the editor with: "Tillich, one of the modern Protestant theologians, examines the role of the symbol in expressing and maintaining religious faith" (xvi.). Tillich's essay is located under "Ideas in the World of Philosophy." Also in this 1986 textbook is Simone Weil's "Spiritual Autobiography," described by the editor with: "This letter to her spiritual adviser, written during World War II, shows the depth of Weil's thinking about Christianity and in the intensity of her commitment to her ideals" (Ibid.). *A World of Ideas* expands religion to an entire chapter on "Faith" in 1998.

An exception to the other textbooks, *The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Expository Prose* contains the chapter "Philosophy and Religion" in its 1980s' seventh edition (Eastman 1988). In addition, biblical excerpts and texts that address belief are located throughout the textbook under themes of "Personal Report," "People and Places," "Signs of the Times," "History," "Politics and Government," "Literature and the Arts," and "Science." For example, an excerpt from Matthew of the New Testament of the Bible is located under "Prose Forms and Parables" a sub-genre of "Literature and the Arts." There is a lack of contextual material as the excerpt is not attributed to the Bible. Instead, the author is listed as Jesus and a footnote states "Parables of the Kingdom" are "From Jesus' sayings to his disciples on the Mount of Olives, as reported in Matthew xxv." Bible readers will recognize

that Matthew is a chapter in the New Testament. Those unfamiliar with the Bible might not know the attribution. The biblical excerpt is immediately followed by “Zen Parables” with no author, footnotes or attribution. Also, the chapter on “Philosophy and Religion” has no introduction, definitions or scaffolding of inquiry. In addition, there are no response questions for many texts. Thus textbooks from the 1970s through the 1980s concentrated on diversifying issues of gender and race as identity markers with an emphasis on providing texts for reflection, rather than context for analysis. Although religion is present among the multi-cultural identity markers it is unaddressed as such during this time period. It largely “goes without saying.”

By the 1990s the rhetorical situation is better addressed. During the 1990s two strategies that transpire are offering several perspectives on issues in readers, and including full chapters on religion. Eight of the sixteen top titles included chapters on religion during this time period. The 1994 second edition of Jack Selzer’s *Conversations: Readings for Writing* opens with Burke’s oft-cited passage about entering a parlor where a heated discussion is taking place. “You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument then you put in your oar” (*Philosophy of Literary Form* 110-111). Selzer explains that *Conversations* “encourages student writing on important current civic issues” (vii). He states: “The premise of this reader is that writing is less a private act of making personal meaning out of nothing than it is a public and social act of making meaning within a particular rhetorical situation” (vii.-viii.). He further states that textbooks often present one or

two authoritative voices in their thematic “readers” leaving students thinking “Gee, that sure seems right to me. How could I disagree with such an expert?” (viii.). Instead, Selzer offers several perspectives—“conversations with context” (Ibid.). It goes beyond debate and point-counterpoint. *Conversations* concentrates on themes of education, race, and gender. It does not have a chapter on religion, but touches on it with a cartoon of Jesus carrying an electric chair strapped to his back (895) in the section on capital punishment; an excerpt from Robert Bly’s “Iron John” (327) under gender; Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman” (295); and Martin Luther King Junior’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (673) located under “civil rights, equal rights, and the law.”

#### 1.8 The twenty-first century religion: Now You See It, Now You Don’t

While the eight textbooks (of the top sixteen) included a chapter on religion between 1994 to 2008, four of those textbooks eliminated the chapters between 2009 and 2012. Several scholars, including Diamond (xix.) point to the resurgence in religious issues in the public square following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 as bringing religion into the classroom as a topic from the public sphere. This, however, doesn’t explain the inclusion of religion chapters prior to 2001. Attempting to set religion apart as its own discourse of essences “visions,” “faith,” “souls,” and “prophecies” apparently failed. The eight textbooks included the following chapters on religion: “One Nation Under God: American Myths of Church and State” in *Rereading American* (Colombo 2007), “Philosophy and Religion” in *The Norton*

*Reader* (Eastman 1998), “Visions of Spirituality” in *Dreams and Inward Journeys* (Ford 2004), “Faith” in *A World of Ideas* (Jacobus 1994), “Religion in America” in *The Blair Reader* (Kirszner 2008), “Faith: What We Believe” in *The Presence of Others* (Lunsford 1994), “Religious Thought and Experience” in *The McGraw-Hill Reader* (Muller 1994), and “Body and Soul” *The Little, Brown Reader* (Stubbs 2003). So three of the textbooks included a chapter on religion in 1994, one in 1998, and one each introduced the chapters in 2003, 2004, 2007 and 2008. Interestingly, Pearson/Longman published its first topics reader solely of religious readings in 2009, Jonathan S. Cullick’s *Religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Cullick responds to other scholarship in the field in his preface, largely *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom* (Vander Lei and Kyburz 2005), a compilation of thirteen essays addressing the intersection of writing and religion that I will describe in Chapter Two. So there was a surge of emphasis placed on religion and composition from 1994 to 2009. However, between 2009 and 2012, this emphasis was removed from half of the textbooks that contained it.

The four textbooks that removed religion chapters were *Rereading America*, *A World of Ideas*, *The Presence of Others*, and *The Little, Brown Reader*. Negative instructor and student reception played a role in excising the chapter on faith according to Ruskiewicz, co-editor of *The Presence of Others*. By the 2008 fifth edition of *The Presence of Others* “faith” has become “ethics” and Ruskiewicz allows that “religion has just about disappeared from the collection” (interview

2012.) Nonetheless issues of “faith” continue to exist located under “ethics.” Reception played a role in removing a religion chapter according to Cullen, one of the editors of *Rereading America* that replaced the religion chapter with one on sustainability. The editor emphasizes that the switch from religious to environmental issues is due to increasing demand to address “green studies” on campuses, while Stubbs states that teachers and students found questioning religion distasteful, and Jacobus said that he found that instructors literally avoided the chapter on “faith.” Why instructors may have avoided chapters largely missing context of inquiry, or those that affirmed faith, will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Two.

Approaching the twenty-first century, some editors attempted to keep religion in textbooks just by changing terms to those more accommodating to textbook users. Ruszkiewicz stated that exchanging “religion” for “sacred” wasn’t enough to improve reception of the textbook chapter. Of course he just exchanged one religious term for another. He later removed texts on religion and renamed the chapter “ethics.” In the seventh edition of *Dreams and Inward Journeys: A Rhetoric and Reader for Writers* (Ford 2010), essays addressing religion are located in the chapter “Voyages in Spirituality.” Some texts appear to be fluid in subject matter, according to the editors’ placement from edition to edition, such as Linda Goodall’s essay “In the Forest of Gombe” where she recounts a transcendent experience with: “It seemed to me, as I struggled afterward to recall the experience, that *self* was utterly absent: I and the chimpanzees, the earth and trees and air, seemed to merge, to become one

with the spirit power of life itself “(*emphasis author’s* 492). The essay moves from its location in “Voyages in Spirituality” in the seventh edition to the chapter “Journeys and Reflections” in the eighth edition. Goodall’s essay is described by the editors’ as telling of her “mystical experience of the interconnectedness of scientific and spiritual knowledge after returning to the place in Africa that was her home with the chimpanzees she came to study and love” in the thematic introductions in both editions where it is located under different themes. The response suggestions (following the essay) remain the same for the different thematic headings, one heading that speaks of spirituality and the other heading of travels.

While the contextualization of Goodall’s essay is the same for two different themes, it changes for Natalie Goldberg’s essay “On the Shores of Lake Biwa” from edition to edition in the same textbook. Goldberg describes her experience as a student of Zen Buddhism when she visits a monastery in Japan. Her essay moves from “Journeys and Reflection” in the seventh edition to “Voyages in Spirituality” in the eighth edition of *Dreams and Inward Journeys*. Only the contextualization for Goldberg’s essay changes as it moves from one thematic heading to another. Preceding her text “On the Shores of Lake Biwa” in the chapter “Journeys” is the journal writing suggestion: “Write about a time when you went on a trip to expand your understanding of a subject that you had studied. How were your expectations different from the reality of the trip?” (146). When located under “Voyages in Spirituality,” the journal entry suggestion changes to: “Write about a time when you



went on a trip or course of study to expand your understanding of a spiritual or philosophical subject. How were your expectations different from the reality of your new experience?” (481). First-year college students may not have taken trips due to spiritual or philosophical motivations. In addition, response questions in the spiritual chapter encourage students to reflect not on their “travels” (in the seventh edition), but rather on “spiritual” experiences in the eighth edition. One new question (in the latter edition) to spark writing—following the essay—is “Considering your own knowledge of spiritual practices, how do you relate to Goldberg’s experiences?” (489). So in one case (Goodall’s) spirituality is addressed under one chapter designated for “Voyages in Spirituality” and one on “Journeys and Reflections,” and in another case the word “spiritual” is added into contextualization for the chapter to address spirituality. It’s interesting that Goodall’s essay is consistently addressed as “mystical” and “spiritual” though it is no longer contained as such in thematic headings by the 2012 edition of the textbook. Instead it is located under “Journeys and Reflections.” In some cases religion is set apart from other discourses, and in other cases, it is not, even in the same textbook.

Changing terms, yet keeping essays and images that address religion in the textbooks, has resulted in (at least) one-hundred-and-fifteen images and texts in more recent editions (of each of the top sixteen titles) in 2012. Twelve of the sixteen titles, seventy-five percent, have no chapters featuring religious terms. Instead essays that address religion are located under various themes including “family,” “identities,”

“environment,” “personal values,” “morality,” “ethics” and “relationships.” Of the four textbooks that include chapters with religious terms, three of those textbooks include essays or images addressing religion in additional chapters headed under various other themes. This means that only one textbook of the top sixteen available that were published in 2012 attempt to contain religion under a term for religion like “soul,” or “belief.” More prevalent is treating articles addressing religion as just another identity marker. Also, of the one-hundred-and-fifteen written and visual texts with a religious focus, twenty of them (seventeen percent) address doubt, non-belief or secular ideas. The percentage of such articles that question belief is thirteen percent over the span of fifty-nine textbooks over the years. Clearly, alternative viewpoints to those that affirm faith are only being presented in textbooks lightly.

It is interesting that the editors of some of these textbooks include a chapter on religion as an identity marker. Rand, in addressing students who identify as evangelical Christians, states that “spiritual identity may be the primary kind of selfhood more than a few of them draw upon in making meaning of their lives and the world around them” (350). Rand draws upon James Calvin Schaap, who states that religion should be considered another cultural identity marker not unlike race or gender (“Enacting Faith” 351). He states:

In some ways ... being a Christian writer presents internal challenges no different from those facing a gay novelist or a Native American poet, since each of us has to choose a primary identity to hold with the most spirited conviction.” (22)

Rand, however, does suggest that few scholars would agree with placing belief systems in the categories of race, class and gender (Ibid.). Religion can be recognized as a socio-cultural identity marker along with the constructs of concepts such as race, class and gender and their community discourses. In fact, according to editors, instructor and student reception indicates that textbooks that attempted to set religion apart from other identity markers were rejected, especially in the cases of presenting religion from an emic perspective. Editors perceived a need, or just desired to present religion, then removed some texts and chapters due to demand. Stubbs of *The Little, Brown Reader* explains:

We're required by the publisher to introduce one or two new sections with each new edition, which usually means dropping a section or two that did not fare well with reviewers. We tend to collect in our files essays (short views, poems, pictures) that we like and hope to include in some future edition. Sections often include two contrasting or complementary topics (Teaching and Learning; Work and Play; Law and Disorder) and I suppose at some point it occurred to us that we had the start of a section on "Body and Soul," and then we juggled the possibilities, adding and subtracting pieces, ending with a section of the appropriate length. We liked the "Body and Soul" section very much, and we regretted that it didn't go over well with our reviewers. (Interview 2012)

The tenth edition (2006) of *The Little, Brown Reader* that contains the chapter "Body and Soul" is a 708-page textbook. The twelfth edition (2012) is streamlined to 570 pages. The chapter "Body and Soul" is removed in the twelfth edition. The only essay from "Body and Soul" included in the twelfth edition that addresses religion is one that expresses non-belief, Langston Hughes "Salvation" whereby he relates an artificial conversion experience. Who are the reviewers who

make decisions about readers selected for textbooks? Bloom states that aside from publishers' in-house reviewers, "Every edition of a canonical Reader is also vetted by multiple reviewers—among them, classroom teachers who adopt the book and other teachers whose responses are either volunteered or solicited by the publisher" ("The Essay Canon" 412).

### 1.9 Conclusion

Analyzing the top sixteen university composition textbooks with thematic readers—in fifty-nine textbooks that offer a representation of a historical timeline from a possible one-hundred-and-seventeen books—religion and its various terms are prevalent. The five-hundred-and-two images and texts (in this study of fifty-nine books) that discuss religion have been consistent since the textbooks' first editions through those editions used in classrooms in 2012. This study does not examine engagement or whether or not the texts and images have been included in classroom assignments. Nonetheless, editors indicate that classroom reception influences the inclusion of religion. Initially, editors included religion as an identity marker along with class and gender issues, often without any contextual materials in the early editions of the textbooks. In this case religion went without say, without questioning. It just appeared in the textbooks. However from 1994 to 2008, eight of the textbooks included religion as its own chapter, using chapter headings that include transcendent terms such as "belief," "God," "visions," "faith," and "soul." Once religion was set apart, contextual materials, largely affirming and presented from an emic stance were

included in some cases. This proved to be non-negotiable for instructors and students to the point that half of the textbook editors that had included a chapter on religion removed the chapter by 2012 due to rejection by textbook users. This I will explore more in Chapter Two, how reception of religion occurs in the classroom. Nonetheless, religion stayed in the textbooks under more perceived palatable themes among other identity markers. This is a way to keep religion in the textbooks, but also a way to include religion as a discourse, which I will explore in Chapter Four.

In addition, there is a rhetoric of affirmation that occurs through the absence or presence of context. Sacred texts are often presented without a pedagogy of inquiry in composition textbooks. In fact, many of the texts are largely affirmative that ask students to draw upon their own religious experiences in order to write analytical papers. In the earlier textbooks (1970s and 1980s) writing was self-reflective and did not address multiple viewpoints. However, in the 1990s when context was added, it was largely affirming of belief. In fact, *The Presence of Others* attacked the only articles expressing non-belief, a strategy later removed. Even without criticizing those who don't express a belief in a particular religion, the terms of religion themselves are affirming to believers. Burke states:

The subject of religion falls under the head of rhetoric in the sense that *rhetoric* is the art of *persuasion*, and religious cosmogonies are designed, in the last analysis, as exceptionally thoroughgoing modes of persuasion. (*Rhetoric of Religion* v. emphasis his)

For example, words like “faith” mean to hold a belief not based on truth. But rather than being concerned with whether or not faith exists, whether or not it can be

measured, or what it ought to mean, the focus of this project is how the term operates as a rhetoric of affirmation in textbooks, especially when religious terms head up chapters. Even more interesting, is how such religious terms function or don't function in a scholarly environment. One element of persuasion is inherent in the terms themselves, another when they are free-floating of context, and yet another when students and instructors are left without materials for inquiry. While there is much scholarship on the marginalization of religion (that I examine in Chapter Two), as Sollod discusses in "The Hollow Curriculum," it is the non-believer that is likely to be marginalized if instructors use the texts, images and editorial matter as they are presented in the top sixteen textbooks in this study. In addition, in an environment requiring inquiry, the editorial "tools" often are detrimental to exploring other perspectives than those presented. To reiterate the essay requirement from UTA's custom textbook:

The essay indicates an understanding of other positions on the issue and explicates them fairly and accurately. Conceding certain points and/or sympathizing with alternative perspectives, the text offers a direct and thoughtful explanation about why it nonetheless retains its stated position, demonstrating an ability to determine and respond to subtle disagreements within broader arguments. (Wood ixiv.)

Students are required to consider "alternative perspectives" when often none are given, and to demonstrate an ability to recognize "broader arguments." The manner in which religion and its various terms are presented in composition textbooks usually discourages viewing conflicting arguments and looking at the broader argument. Instead, there is a measure of persuasion at work of accepting

perspectives as presented without contexts. Thus, students are left with writing on “what pleases God,” what they view of their “inner most souls” and which styles of body postures during prayer make them most uncomfortable. It is not surprising that such materials were replaced in later editions of textbooks. Nonetheless, religion remains in current textbooks, often without an apparatus for examination or analysis, hallmarks of the composition classroom.

## Chapter 2

### Religion is Already in the Readers---Teachers and Students

#### 2.1 Introduction

During the time period from 1997 to 2008, half of the top sixteen university composition textbook titles—which contain thematic readers—include a chapter on religion as its own section topic. Some of the textbooks even include excerpts from perceived sacred texts (Jacobus 1998, Lunsford 1997) such as the Bible and the Koran, and prayers (Lunsford 1994 207). Composition scholarship that focuses on the intersection of writing and religion is also prevalent during this eleven-year period. Some scholars (Rand 350, Perkins 586, Dively 56, Vander Lei 4, Carter 572) assert that religion is treated negatively by composition instructors when students include religion in their papers in secular classrooms (which I will address later). In fact, one scholar suggests that religion is marginalized in textbooks (Williams 105). Much scholarship tends to address the marginalization of religion from secular classrooms, and no scholarship addresses the fact that religion is indeed present in secular composition textbooks. This chapter describes how religion is not marginalized, but is rather present in textbooks, and how it arrives in the composition classroom via textbooks, instructors and students. In several cases, instructors even announce their own religious affiliations in their scholarship, which can be perceived as a form of persuasion by encouraging students to announce their own beliefs in modeling the behavior of their instructors.



## 2.2 Religion is not marginalized in composition textbooks

First, in discussing composition textbooks, Bronwyn T. Williams claims in “The Book and the Truth: Faith, Rhetoric, and Cross-Cultural Communication” that religious engagement is marginalized in rhetoric and composition studies (105). He cites four secular multicultural textbooks that he asserts do not address religion that actually do give a presence to religion to the point of one of the textbooks that he cites (*Multitude: Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers*) that includes the first three chapters of Genesis from the Bible (Divakaruni 13). Williams, more specifically, takes offense with the secular textbooks he references as not explicitly “addressing matters of faith” (“The Book and the Truth” 105). He states:

Pick up most multicultural composition readers and you can find sections such as Growing Up, Education, Families, Places We Call Home, Ways by Which We Learn, The Imaging of Ignorance, Our Sameness Our Difference, Women and Men, Popular Culture and Media Messages, Individuals and Institutions, Turning Points and so on (Knepler, Knepler, and Knepler 2002; Divakaruni 1997; Stanford 2001; Verburg 1997). Few of these anthologies, however, explicitly address matters of faith. Even as multiculturalism has become a well-accepted part of Rhetoric and Composition during the last fifteen years, it has avoided any direct engagement with matters of faith or the tenets of a religion that structure that faith. (ibid)

However, one could pick up mainstream textbooks during the time period referenced by Williams (the fifteen years preceding the publication of his article in 2005), and one would find religion present in composition textbooks, including at least three of the four books that he cites. (One of the textbooks is out of print, was replaced with a later edition, and has not been available for sale from textbook

sellers.) Along with other identity issues, one can find full chapters on religion in the top sixteen secular titles during this time period, including “Dreams of Vision and Prophecy” (Ford 1994), “Faith” (Jacobus 1998), “What We Believe, Faith: One Nation Under God” (Lunsford 1994, 1997), “Religious Thought and Experience” (Muller 1994), “Philosophy and Religion” (Peterson 2000), and “Body and Soul” (Stubbs 2003). These secular textbooks also include excerpts of perceived sacred texts such as the Bible (Jacobus 1998) and the Koran (Jacobus 1998, Lunsford 1997) as readings. One textbook (Lunsford 1994) includes a sermon by Martin Luther King, Jr. where he states: “Man is not able to save himself or the world. Unless he is guided by God’s spirit, his new-found scientific power will become a devastating Frankenstein monster that will bring to ashes his earthly life” (155). This directly deals with religion. Also, in the sermon “Our God is Able,” King professes: “The God whom we worship is not a weak and incompetent God. He is able to beat back gigantic waves of opposition and bring low prodigious mountains of evil” (Ibid.).

Two of the books Williams cites were published in 1997 and one each in 2001 and 2002. Williams does not state how many textbooks he examined, or how he came to select the four textbooks that he references as evidence of a reluctance to include religion in secular textbooks that feature other cultural elements such as ethnicity, gender, and the writing of authors from countries outside the United States. The four textbooks that Williams cites are multicultural, and three do contain articles that invoke religion. One of the books that William states is lacking in elements of

religion is *Making Contact: Readings from Home and Abroad*, published in 1997 and edited by Carol J. Verburg. In the textbook, the narrator of the fiction article “Two Americas,” written by Carlos Fuentes, invokes God in the third paragraph. The narrator leaves Spain by ship, passes the Canary Islands, lands as the sole survivor of the voyage on an unknown shore, and he gives thanks for his safe passage across the sea. The paragraph reads: “I get down on my knee and gives thanks to a God who is certainly too busy with more important matters to think about me. I cross two old branches and invoke the sacrifice and benediction. I claim this land in the name of Catholic Kings [...] (101).” God, prayer, fashioning a makeshift Christian cross from tree branches, and claiming the land for kings of the Catholic faith do indeed emphasize religion. The narrator of “Two Americas” also speaks of the biblical story of the universal worldwide flood, perceiving that he has discovered a Paradise that was exempt from the flood (102, 104), and the capturing of Africans from the ivory coasts to bring them to “Christian clergymen who would convert them and save their souls” (104). The reading also describes the plight of Jews in Spain (110, 116).

Another essay in *Making Contact*, Salman Rushdie’s “The Broken Mirror,” turns a focus to religious issues when describing the assimilation concerns of Rushdie’s fellow authors who have immigrated from India. Rushdie writes:

We are Hindus who have crossed the black water; we are Muslims who eat pork. And as a result—as my use of the Christian notion of the Fall indicates—we are now partly of the West. (56)

Aside from mentioning the Fall from Genesis in the Bible, Rushdie also references the Biblical story of Lot (54). It is not unusual for elements of religion to be contained in works of both fiction and non-fiction in literature textbooks. However, some scholars that are addressed here are claiming that religion is marginalized in secular composition textbooks.

Often, the textbooks may draw from works of literature. Michael Bérubé, author of *What's So Liberal About the Liberal Arts? Classroom Politics and "Bias" in Higher Education*, explains that literature encompasses many social topics. He states: "So when people tell me I should focus my teaching on 'literature' rather than on personal, social, cultural, or political questions, I always stop to ask them what, exactly, they imagine literature to be about" (*What's Liberal* 11). Literature can also be about religious issues, or at the very least reference religious texts.

That religion can be contained in both works of fiction and non-fiction is not surprising. However, it is not expected to be found in composition textbooks despite William's contention. Perhaps William's complaint is that religious issues are not dealt with explicitly enough. He might mean that thematic chapters were not devoted to the topic in the particular multicultural textbooks he selected to cite. One of the textbooks that he cites, *Multitude: Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers* (second edition 1997), contains chapters of Genesis from the King James Bible located in the chapter "How it All Began." An introduction to the chapter on origins explains that some of the excerpts in the chapter are "presented simply as myths or tales, and some

presented as divine revelation” (3). Which readings are to be taken as myths, and which are to be taken as divine revelation, are not distinguished in editorial notes. The Old Testament chapters are listed in the table of contents as “Genesis, Chapters 1, 2 and 3: The Creation and the Fall” with the tagline: “The Judeo-Christian account of the creation of humankind and the loss of paradise” (ix.). The Genesis chapters are included in the thematic section along with an “Eskimo Creation Myth,” an excerpt from Plato’s “Symposium” and Christopher Columbus’s “Letter Describing His First Voyage.” The textbook editor, Divakaruni, states to readers: “Think back to stories from your culture which you heard or read, as you were growing up, that attempted to explain the creation of the world. Write down the story that you remember most distinctly” (4). This invites students to write about texts considered sacred. This “prereading activity” [sic.] precedes the text “The Time When There Were No People on the Earth Plain: Bering Strait Eskimo Creation Myth” (ibid). In addition are selections of African slave accounts and other stories of immigration. This includes Frederick Douglass’s “My Early Years” condemning slavery with biblical arguments (43). So religion is indeed present in this textbook. But William’s argument may be that the text doesn’t engage with religion, and the “tenets of religion that structure faith,” through the location of the biblical excerpts near a “creation myth” and through the contextual editorial notes that address “myth” rather than belief. For example, the “prereading activity” to the chapters of Genesis suggests that readers “[...] write briefly about what your religion or culture considers

the ideal relationship between men and women. Do you know any stories or *myths* that illustrate this?” (13 *emphasis mine*). Williams would take umbrage to one of the definitions of myth as not just a story, but a false story.

One of the definitions of myth is “an unfounded or false notion” (Webster) akin to what McCutcheon would define as “not stable stories but networks of action, assumptions and representations—what other scholars might term a discourse” (“Myth” 201). McCutcheon’s article on “Myth” is included among essays compiled in *Guide to the Study of Religion*. He also equates myth with storytelling or narration (Ibid.) and he contends that the term “myth” often conveys two meanings. One is that of “widely shared beliefs that are simply false” (“Myth” 190), and secondly to “tag apparently fictional stories that originated in early human communities as attempts to explain commonplace but mysterious events in the natural world” (ibid). McCutcheon adds, “Myths, in this sense are understood to be aetiologies that explain the origins or causes of something that cannot be explained by scientific accounts” (Ibid.). This is where some people believe myths of origin to be true accounts, especially in the case of religious beliefs. This is also where McCutcheon states that stories “come to the rescue where knowledge fails us” (ibid). Some myths can appear to be true. For example there is the definition of myth as “a traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of a world view of a people or explain a practice, belief or natural phenomenon” (Merriam Webster). Williams appears to take umbrage when myth is used in the context of a false notion.

McCutcheon also emphasizes Roland Barthes's claim that myth is "a particular type of human endeavor displayed in but not limited to storytelling" (201). McCutcheon explains that he views mythmaking as a human activity, an activity demonstrated by the elevation of both the Bible in some instances, and the United States Declaration of Independence with the words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident" (201-202). He states that both texts "are particularly powerful instances where active processes have dressed up what might otherwise be mundane and forgettable historical moments as extraordinary ones" (202). McCutcheon states: "The opening of the Declaration effectively removes readers from the tug-and-pull of the contingent, historical world, and places them in an abstract, ahistorical realm where such things as truths are obvious, enduring and self-evident" (Ibid.). Such truths may have appeared to have "spontaneously arose from the ground fully formed" (Ibid.) as Adam is created from dust in the biblical verses of Genesis present in the multicultural composition textbook *Multitude*. Which definitions are students to accept for "myth?" How are students to differentiate between what are concluded to be myths and truths when the textbooks don't do this? How does one define truth, and why are these questions that should be addressed in a composition, or secular writing textbook?

The readings in *Multitude* point to truth, and the contextual materials point to myth. For example, additional response questions in *Multitude* suggest Genesis contains symbolism rather than being a work to be read as literal. Therefore faith or

belief in the literal text is not affirmed. Response question number three reads: “What is man created out of? In what way is this symbolic?” Following a question directing students to examine mankind’s fall from grace, the word “fall” is placed in quotation marks with the follow-up question referencing the “fall” asking “What does the *myth* indicate about human nature?” (17 *emphasis mine*). Fall, is also not capitalized as in the “Fall” as is typically done. In addition, another activity suggestion for readers is to “Compare the biblical account of creation with the scientific theory of human evolution” (18). Thus, readers are directed by editorial content to view the chapters of Genesis as a creation myth, and then to compare the chapter’s concept of creation with science-based evolution. Indeed, Williams is correct in that the textbook he cites in this case does not explicitly address “matters of faith” but only if one ignores what the reading itself says in preference for how the text is contextualized through the rhetoric of location and editorial commentary. The text itself contains a commandment for the man and woman created by God not to eat of the fruit of knowledge of good and evil, Genesis 2:17. Nowhere does the text itself (these three chapters of Genesis) state that it is simply a myth and something other than the actual word of God.

Textbooks that *do* however, address matters of faith include Lunsford’s 1994 *The Presence of Others: Readings for Critical Thinking and Writing*, and *The Presence of Others: Voices That Call for a Response* (1997). In one instance, Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz present “The Nishmat Prayer,” a brief portion of the



Jewish Sabbath morning service as recorded in the Siddur, the Hebrew prayer book. The Hebrew prayer appeals to God only and not a Christian savior, as would be expected. The second of the two paragraphs follows:

He is God of the first and of the last, the God of all creatures, the Lord of all generations, who is extolled with many praises, and guideth his world with lovingkindness [sic.] and his creatures with tender mercies. The Lord slumbereth not, nor sleepeth; he arouseth the sleepers and awakeneth the slumberers, he maketh the dumb to speak, loseth the bound, supporteth the falling, and raiseth up the bowed. To thee alone we give thanks. (Lunsford 1994 207).

Response questions by the editors include: “Which authors in this chapter might find this prayer affirming? Which authors might find it incompatible with their beliefs?” (207). The final sentence in the prayer: “to thee alone we give thanks” may be what the editors are pointing to as rest of the prayer merely extols God (a single deity) by use of the word “alone.” This does not set the prayer apart from other texts including Martin Luther King Jr.’s prayer “Our God is Able” (154) as King does not mention any other deity or divine source other than God. Other authors of “readers” in the chapter mention God only (no second divine entity or son of God). From the chapter “What We Believe, Faith: One Nation, Under God” it is difficult to find an article or essay “incompatible” with the Nishmat Prayer. The chapter includes King’s prayer “Our God is Able;” Will Herberg’s “The American Way of Life” (162) which doesn’t mention religion; George Gallup Jr.’s and Jim Castelli’s “An American Faith” (166) which discusses polls that indicate religion is not much less important to those most educated in the United States, Anthony Brandt’s “Do Kids Need

Religion?” (173) that discusses non-belief; William Least Heat Moon’s “Conversations with a Trappist Monk in Georgia” (183) where a monk describes “getting closer to God” (187), Alice Walker’s “Everything is a Human Being” (189) that engages with Native American philosophy; Robert MacNeil’s “Wordstruck” (200) about being struck by the language of religion rather than the spirit of it; and Leslie Marmon Silko’s “Lullaby” (208), a Native American poem. Following the lullaby that includes “The earth is your mother,/she holds you./The sky is your father,/he protects you” (Ibid.), students are directed to “Think for a while about your own spiritual and/or religious beliefs—or about your secular beliefs. Then try your hand at writing a lullaby that would capture the essence of those beliefs” (209). None of the aforementioned texts conflict with the Nishmat Prayer by advocating a savior or the son of God, or even a triune God. It is only the editorial notes in which a conflict is suggested. The editors (Lunsford and Ruskiewicz) of *The Presence of Others* (1994) are directing readers to view the other works in the chapter through a Christian lens by asking if a Jewish prayer is incompatible with the other religious ideas presented in other texts.

### 2.3 Textbook editors present readers through a Christian lens

Daniel Boyarin, the Taubman Professor of Talmudic Culture in the Departments of Near Eastern Studies and Rhetoric at the University of California, Berkeley, suggests that it often occurs that Judaism is compared to Christianity. He contends that Judaism is a set of beliefs and an ethnicity whereby Christianity is a

religion, and that Judaism did not exist as a religion before the birth of Christ but was later demarcated as such as boundaries were drawn by those attempting to define Christianity (*Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* front matter). It states on Boyarin's book cover flap:

There were no characteristics or features that could be described as uniquely Jewish or Christian in late antiquity [...] Rather, Jesus-following Jews and Jews who did not follow Jesus lived on a cultural map in which beliefs, such as that in a second divine being, and practices, such as keeping kosher or maintaining the Sabbath, were widely and variably distributed. The ultimate distinction between Judaism and Christianity were imposed from above by "border makers," heresiologists anxious to construct a discrete identity for Christianity. By defining some beliefs and practices as Christian and others as Jewish or heretical, they moved ideas, behaviors, and people to one side or another of an artificial border.

Furthermore, Boyarin states that Judaism is not just a faith, but rather a belief system that cannot "be separated from ethnicity, nationality, language, and shared history" (*Border Lines* 8). Boyarin allows that there are instances where Judaism is both a religion and is not a religion. However, he doesn't point out that people without the Jewish ethnicity can convert to Judaism. His main contention is that Judaism is often viewed through a "Christian worldview" (*Ibid.*). The editors of *The Presence of Others* (1994) suggest students draw borders by defining whereby Jewish religious beliefs and practices are "incompatible" with the other religions presented in the textbook when none of these readings present a second divine entity. Indeed, to consider the conflict of Judaism with the other readings, it must be viewed through a Christian lens.

Another instance of Ruskiewicz engaging in matters of faith (which Williams contends does not occur in multicultural composition textbooks) happens with the following editorial introduction:

In “Our God is Able,” Martin Luther King, Jr., explains how, in a moment of personal crisis, he resolves his dilemma by taking his problem to God: “My head in my hands, I bowed over the kitchen table and prayed aloud.” Such recourse to prayer in times of trouble seems almost instinctual, a human trait as distinctive as tears or smiles. Indeed, the rabbi Herbert M. Baumgard defines prayer as “the yearning of the divine spark within man to join itself to more of itself” (1994 207).

In this case the borders between Judaism and Christianity are blurred as a rabbi is joined with King in an editorial note affirming of prayer. This editorial note also deals directly with matters of faith. A response question for students encourages them to write a prayer. The question reads: “Have you ever had an experience with prayer like that Martin Luther King, Jr. describes in ‘Our God is Able?’ If so, narrate it” (Ibid.). This engages students directly with faith-based issues and would result in a dicey situation on how to grade such an assignment—the writing of a prayer, or an experience with prayer. Even more tenuous is bringing prayer into the secular classroom, negotiating with issues of separation of church and state. This I address at length in Chapter Three, the separation between the study and the practice of religion as it is concerned with the United States Constitution.

On the back cover of Lunsford’s and Ruskiewicz’s 1997 *The Presence of Others*, Ruskiewicz has a single quote: “A composition reader ought to embody a lively intellectual conversation, with real issues at stake, offered by people willing to

explain their convictions.” Some of these convictions will be religious as the book contains the chapter “Faith: One Nation Under God” that includes King’s “Our God is Able,” and an excerpt from “The Qur’an,” affirming editorial notes toward Pope John Paul’s speech (as I addressed in Chapter One), and editorial notes critical of two texts by non-believers of any religion. A response question following King’s “Our God is Able” states: “King argues that God is able to overcome evil, to ‘beat back gigantic waves of opposition.’ What examples or reasons or proof can you offer to support or refute King’s claim?” (1997 160). What examples of proof, indeed, can students offer that God is able to overcome evil? What instances can be shown that God beat opposition? Who can say what is opposition to God, assuming God is a given, self-evident truth? And how does this direct engagement with the tenets of faith play out in a secular academic setting when faith is largely affirmed in the textbook? It is notable that Ruskiewicz states (interview 2012) that this chapter on faith was removed from later editions of the textbook due to negative reception from instructors and students. Ruskiewicz said that while initial responses to the chapter on faith were positive “[...] they were outweighed by instructors who, as I have indicated, were reluctant to address the topic in class because they could not predict how students would respond to it or because the subject itself made students uncomfortable” (interview 2012).

Lunsford and Ruskiewicz may have compiled the very kind of textbook that Williams calls for (one that explicitly addresses matters of faith), and it was

published during the time period he claims religion is marginalized in textbooks. When contacted for clarification on his selection of textbooks as not containing religion, Williams allowed that there are readings addressing religion in the textbooks that he cites. He insists that a few chapters amongst “seventy or more” do not constitute “a substantial engagement with religion.” So, in this instance he states that quantity of the presence of religion is a concern and part of his description of engagement. However, he further clarifies his statement: “My larger point is that religion as a central component of identity construction and epistemology and rhetoric is not a significant focus of the work included in those books” (interview). Thus, he takes issue with the selections or readings themselves as not directly engaging with religion as an identity construction. McCutcheon however states that there is a rhetoric of texts that contain self-evident truths. He insists that self-evident words “do something” (“Myth” 202, *emphasis his*) even if it is just that they “appear and announce their existence” (Ibid.). McCutcheon gives an example of “self-evident” words as those from the United States Declaration of Independence. He states: “We hold these truths to be self-evident” “do something” by removing “readers from the tug and pull of the contingent, historical world and places them in an abstract, ahistorical realm where such things as truths are obvious, enduring and self-evident” (Ibid.) This type of rhetoric can occur in literature and in the Bible when truths not to be questioned are presented. The chapters of Genesis *do* something as being selections from the Bible that many people perceive to be the

true story of creation. Genesis begins with “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). Bakhtin claims there are no “neutral words (*The Dialogic Imagination* 293). He states “language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents [...] All words have the ‘taste’ of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, an age group, the day, an hour (Ibid.). Thus, what is said in the readings carries weight even if the contextual materials are not always affirming of the messages given in the readings. This holds to be the case especially in the instances of “sacred” texts perceived to be the word of the divine.

#### 2.4 Religion is formulated in identity constructions

In addition, some of the readings in the textbooks that Williams cites do deal with identity construction. In the textbook *Multitude: Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers* (in the second edition cited by Williams), Douglass describes how slavery was biblically legitimized through God’s curse of the sons of Ham and that the lineage of Ham had been diluted through female slaves conceiving children from their white slaveholders. Douglass writes: “If the lineal descendants of Ham are alone to be scripturally enslaved, it is certain that slavery of the south is unscriptural; for thousands are ushered into the world, annually, who, like myself, owe their existence to white fathers, and those fathers most frequently their masters” (“My Early Years” 43). So Douglass questions the tenets of a faith that would enslave a people as Fuentes also does throughout “The Two Americas” located in the textbook *Making Contact: Readings from Home and Abroad*, also cited by Williams. Fuentes

describes slaves sailing from the ports of the Gulf of Guinea “forced to shit and piss on top of one another [...] Has there ever been a race more humiliated, despised, subjected to the pure whim of cruelty than they?” (105). On the same page, Fuentes states (tongue in cheek) that the enslaved population is “redeemed, of course, by religion.” The narrator of Fuentes’s fictional work is a Sephardic Jew who states “Forty days of abstinence did not prevent forty million deaths in Europe” (109). The narration demonstrates cynicism toward Christianity and Catholicism but does engage with religious identities. Another reading that engages with religious identity issues—in a book cited by Williams—is “Twice an Outsider: On Being Jewish and a Woman” written by Vivian Gornick (*Multitude: Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers*) whereby the author describes male Jewish celebrities as breaking Jewish/Gentile boundaries using women as a foil. She explains that she is more offended by gender constructs than disparaging religious remarks. She states: “When I hear an anti-Semitic remark I am hurt, I am angered, but I am not frightened. I do not fear for my life or my livelihood or my right to pursue the open expression of my convictions. When I hear a sexist remark I feel all of the above” (289). So, Williams is correct in that religion is not the “central component” of identity construction in this case. Gender takes center stage here. Nonetheless, Gornick does describe the alienation of many Jews living in the Bronx during the 1940s and her religion is part of her identity. Her essay is located in the chapter titled “The Imaging of Ignorance.”



In the 2002 sixth edition of *Crossing Cultures: Readings for Composition*, another book cited by Williams, are three stories where religion is a part of identity construction. Maya Angelou's autobiographical "Graduation" describes her memories of a high school graduation where faith is interwoven as a cultural element for students at a school for African Americans. Prayers, blessings and appeals to God are stated throughout the autobiography. The high school graduation speech takes on the elements of a church sermon as the audience responds to remarks with "Amen's." Angelou states: "[...Amen's and Yes, sir's began to fall around the room like rain through a ragged umbrella" (26)." The author writes that she speaks directly to God with "I gave myself up to the gentle warmth and thanked God that no matter what evil I had done in my life He had allowed me to live to see this day [...] Out of God's merciful bosom I had won reprieve" (24). In this instance, faith is seamlessly interwoven throughout the narration of events as part of the Southern black culture of a 1940s high school in Stamps, Arkansas. Interestingly, the 2002 textbook, in contextual materials, does not address the religious component of identity at all, even though it is evidentially significant to the author's experience as religious rituals, and instances of belief are mentioned nine times in the nine-and-a-half page essay. Angelou's "Graduation" is noted for being reprinted repeatedly in textbooks over the span of fifty years (1946-1996) and ranks sixteenth in a database of most popular readers compiled in composition textbooks with anthologies according to Bloom's "The Essay Canon" (426) during this time period.

*Crossing Cultures*, a textbook cited by Williams, also contains two other articles that reference religion. Religion is deflected in favor of viewing the text through a lens of segregation issues. One question asks about a person's racial insensitivity in the narration (31) rather than mentioning the faith portrayed of the characters. In the same textbook (*Crossing Cultures*) Grace Paley's short story "The Loudest Voice" focuses on a Christmas school play foisted on a Jewish population of students (54). Once again, contextual materials direct readers to answer questions that do not engage with religion. Out of seventeen response questions that direct attention to the descriptive story elements, and the author's skills with dialogue, is only one question that mentions religion at all in a story based on religious marginalization. The question follows: "Have you ever as a child or adult, participated in a cultural or religious ceremony that was unfamiliar to you, in which you perhaps felt out of place?" (60). Paley's short story does engage with religion, but the "tenets of faith" Williams mentions are not addressed, as the Jewish doctrine is not explained and contextual materials do not engage with the issue of religion as being central to the text.

Also in textbook *Crossing Cultures* is the account "Switch on Bhutan" that focuses on television and Internet technology arriving in 1999 to the Buddhist community of Bhutan in South Asia. The author is journalist Alexis Bloom, who writes of people chanting prayers, and states: "This is still a country where rural areas look as they did in ancient times, and where, for every television antenna, a

thousand prayer flags flutter” (440). Fifteen questions follow the text with not a single mention of religion, Buddhism or any terms of religion. In addition, the reading does not address Buddhist beliefs, but rather focuses on dress and culture without relating the religious underpinnings of these elements. So, in some cases Williams is correct that multiculturalism takes center stage in some of the readings themselves (as well as in the contextual materials), rather than religion. It is interesting to note that Boyarin would incorporate culture into religion while Williams would place religion outside the realm of culture and in its own realm, something to be addressed as other than cultural. In some cases, Williams is correct in that religion is not directly engaged with, however it is present and it is a component of identity construction in some readings. It is somewhat arguable whether or not religion is a central component in Angelou’s and Douglass’s narrations, though it certainly is a significant component.

Although Williams does not mention the editorial materials preceding and following the readings, some of the materials attempt to deflect religion and reflect ethnic cultural practices as the readings are viewed through a lens of ethnic diversity. However, Boyarin would point out that many “religions” are tied to ethnicity such as Judaism, Islam, Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Hinduism (*Border Lines* 8). Viewing religion through a Western, or Christian worldview is what Burke would cite as a “terministic screen” (*Language as Symbolic Action* 45), a filter that simultaneously reflects and deflects attention to events. Burke explains: “Even if any

terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality” (Ibid. *emphasis his*). Thus, vocabularies are both selections and deflections of reality (*Grammar of Motives* 59). Vocabularies used in the contextual materials are reductive and deflect away from religion because they “become a deflection when the given terminology, or calculus, is not suited to the subject matter which it is designed to calculate” (Ibid.). Burke uses the analogy of a photograph as functioning as a terministic screen when the same objects in different photographs are viewed through different color filters. Blakesley builds on Burke’s analogy, stating that a photograph is: “a distillation, a selection of the photographer’s visual field that may or may not be representative of a whole panorama or its subject” (*Elements of Dramatism* 109).

Words, likewise, capture a snapshot of a viewpoint or a perspective as if depicted through a lens. In this case, the core issue of religion and its role in identity are ignored in preference for other story elements in some of the readings in the textbooks cited by Williams. The snapshot is one of ethnicity or gender issues rather than one that separates out issues solely related to religion. Religion is left out of the boundaries of the language snapshot, but would appear in the complete panoramic view. Ironically, by ignoring religion, it is a way for textbook editors to get religion into a secular textbook without acknowledging that it is indeed religion. Unfortunately this does not give students or teachers tools to engage with the

religious elements. Instead religion “goes without saying.” Attention is deflected away from aspects of religious ritual and arguments to instead reflect the texts as multicultural. But also what also occurs is that religion is not emphasized nor addressed. It simply appears, and is affirmed in not being questioned or pointed out, let alone given a pedagogical scaffolding for questioning through contextual materials.

In addition, Williams’s selection is very narrow; four textbooks over the span of six years (1997 to 2002). The textbooks Williams selected were not representative of some of the most mass-marketed textbooks in this study, some including chapters on religion or its related terms. Of course, Williams was selecting composition textbooks with a focus on multiculturalism. Half of the textbooks that I examine which did include religion as the focus, to the point of naming chapters for religious terms, did later eliminate those chapters due to negative reader and reviewer reception. So, there is the dilemma of ignoring religion and leaving it unexamined in favor of other cultural elements, or by attempting to single out religion as its own identity marker. However, in many cases religion was singled out unexamined as well by containing affirming contextualization. In addition, Williams participates in deflection of religion as well, especially by not mentioning the presence of excerpts from a perceived sacred text, the Bible, in his selection of textbooks. It is likely that he takes issue with the packaging, presentation and contextualization of religion as not mentioned, but rather deflected in favor of other multicultural issues such as race

or gender. Thus, it is the unexamined presentations of religion (self-evident or affirmed) at issue in secular composition textbooks that also ask students to engage critically with other issues, but not with religion.

What Williams calls for is setting religion apart from the multicultural, as its own identifier, and viewing texts through a religious lens. However, trying to set religion apart, addressing it explicitly as Williams calls for, created challenges in the classroom which instructors declined to negotiate, according to editors from the textbooks that are examined in Chapter One. Chapters on religion were removed over the years from four of eight textbooks in this project. Editors of three of the textbooks cited poor reception of the chapters as reason for their removal while one editor cited a replacement with “green studies” as more relevant and popular to the university audience. The avoidance of the religion chapters can be due to response questions and supplemental materials that do not model or offer examples of inquiry, questions that would examine religion as a rhetoric or discourse.

A concern is that religion is already in the textbooks with little or no strategies to engage with the topic provided along with the readings that address religion. Either the supplemental materials don’t address religion at all, making it a matter-of-fact topic; a type of persuasion; or the editorial materials affirm the readings as described in Chapter One whereby Catholicism was affirmed by editors Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz and two articles (in the same textbook) by non-believers were criticized in annotations. This results in another form of persuasion. The secular

articles were the only articles criticized through editorial notes in the religion chapter. Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz, the editors of the 1997 *The Presence of Others: Voices That Call for Response*, published two articles on Pope John Paul II with affirming supplemental materials in the same textbook. Ruszkiewicz also announces that he is Catholic. He writes that he was raised in a “strict Catholic tradition” and further alleges: “I take little solace or intellectual satisfaction in faith represented chiefly as a quest for meaning or selfhood. Religion makes more sense to me if it also deals with timeless, evolving truths” (193). But how are students and instructors to decide which items taken on “faith,” belief without evidence, should be declared as “timeless, evolving truths?” Whose truths are to be valid? And how do these truths evolve? Too few textbooks offer contextual information to provide background on religious topics nor do they provide questions for exploring the topics from a lens beyond one of affirmation.

One way to integrate religion into argument is to view it as a Shannon Carter’s description of a discursive formation that is examined in Chapter Four. Rather than attempting to denote “truths,” Carter calls for accepting religion as a discourse, or as a vocabulary of cultural and linguistic codes practiced by a community (“Living Inside the Bible (Belt)” 574). This discursive practice by a community is considered a literacy by language users. This allows students and instructors to explore how religion is used as a rhetoric that involves “[...] critical consciousness, awareness of one’s subject position and the partial and socially

situated nature of one's understanding of the world" ("Living Inside" (572). This involves taking on flexible subject roles by students whereby they negotiate the rhetoric of academic inquiry with the rhetoric of religion involving a kind of rhetorical agility. This is explored in more detail in Chapter Four.

## 2.5 Instructors encourage inviting religion into the classroom

Williams's article that decries the marginalization of religion from textbooks is published in the book *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom* (2005), among a compilation of fourteen scholarly essays. The essays discuss the challenges, successes—and some missteps—when engaging students with religious issues in essay writing. The focus is usually on grappling with religion when it is introduced by students—typically in the papers that they write. Of the sixteen authors, five taught at religious affiliated schools at the time of *Negotiating Religious Faith's* publication, according to their biographies (184-186). Co-editor Vander Lei writes that she was encouraged to compile the book by colleagues in the English Department at Calvin College, a Christian liberal arts institution where she taught (v.). The scholars included in *Negotiating Religious Faith* discuss engaging with religious issues in the secular writing classroom as well as within institutions affiliated with religion. Vander Lei states that she and fellow authors of the book are: "[...] optimistic that by acknowledging the presence of religious faith in our classrooms—maybe even inviting it in—we can do a better job of helping students recognize and respond to inappropriate rhetorical uses of religious faith in both



academic and civic discourse” (“Coming to Terms” 3). Inviting religion into the classroom is one thing. The question is on how to do it.

Some of the authors Vander Lei edits announce their own religious beliefs in their scholarship and thus participate in a rhetoric of encouragement or persuasion for other students to “come out” in faith, which could be perceived as practicing a rhetoric of affirmation or McCutcheon’s notion of empathetic “caretaking” (*Critics Not Caretakers* 17) that is addressed with examples later. McCutcheon insists that scholars must be “no longer content to study mysteries, essences, and private experiences,” (Ibid.) some of the qualities often attributed to faith. Nonetheless, Vander Lei states that barring issues of faith at the classroom door “suggests to students that to succeed in our composition courses, they must deny who they are” (*Negotiating Religious Faith* 4) and the students may then disengage from the coursework. She further alleges:

For many students, teachers, theorists, and administrators, religious faith is a significant part of their private lives; it permeates, animates, and perhaps haunts their thinking. To press such writers into denying the effect that faith has on them and their writing is to pressure them, in Stephen Carter’s words, “to be other than themselves, to act publicly, and sometimes privately as well, as if their faith does not matter to them” (*The Culture of Disbelief* 3). (*Negotiating Religious Faith* 4)

Vander Lei brings up a point of religious students denying who they are when religion is avoided. However, it can be more threatening for some students to confront their beliefs through inquiry, and therefore some students prefer to avoid the topic altogether. By avoiding discussing religion, students actually keep their belief

systems intact, not open to questioning which can be a form of caretaking—of protecting religion as unquestionable truths. Some scholars writing on identities in first-year composition however, insist that new material of any issue challenges students' identities and that is the purpose of inquiry.

Melanie Kill, author of “Acknowledging the Rough Edges of Resistance: Negotiation of Identities for First-Year Composition,” does not touch on religion or faith, but she does address identity issues. She describes first-year composition as a site of “shifting purposes and subject positions in the interactions of the classroom as we address new and varied rhetorical situations” and “expand one’s performative repertoire” (“Acknowledging the Rough” 214). Kill adds: “While we do not always face challenges to our identities, self-presentation is always a product of negotiation, and consequently, we are likely to fall into defensive positions when the stability we rely on to negotiate these presentations is threatened for any reason” (“Acknowledging the Rough” 215). Not speaking on religion, but rather on just the confrontation of different ideas, Kill states: “Any new curriculum, particularly one that calls for rhetorical agility, requires students and teachers to undertake negotiations of identity” (“Acknowledging the Rough” 214-215). This is especially important because reading, writing and analyzing what is read and written about requires questioning the works in play, and one’s subjectivities in those genres as well. One’s subjectivity in a social space is negotiated. Kill explains: “In Thomas P. Hellscher’s words, ‘to do business within a specific community, we occupy the

subject position offered by the genre or genre at hand” (“Acknowledging” 217). She explains that shifting purposes “and subject positions in the interactions of the classroom” occur “as we address new and varied rhetorical situations” (“Acknowledging” 214). So students’ identities can be confronted in various ways, not just through religious belief systems.

David Bartholomae contends that students try on discourses when they write (“Inventing the University” 591) and that students “have to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse” (“Inventing the University” 594). Bartholomae suggests students do this by anticipating an audience with biases (Ibid.) and then have students write to “an outsider, someone excluded from their privileged circle” (595). In other words, a student must consider his or her identity before trying on a discourse that may temper their word choices and argument strategies. Jeffrey M. Ringer suggests that students attempting to incorporate ideas of faith into a researched position paper can result in “identity consequences” for Christian evangelical students, or other students who adhere to absolute truths in their beliefs (“The Consequences of Integrating Faith” 273). Ringer, the author of “The Consequences of Integrating Faith into Academic Writing: Casuistic Stretching and the Biblical Citation,” at the time of publication of his paper wrote that he was assistant professor of English at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee. He directed the writing center, where he conducted a case study of evangelical students attempting to write about their faith in an academic setting. Ringer, states in his

scholarship that his own faith is evangelical Christian (“Integrating Faith” 273). He writes that a student he interviewed faced a key “epistemological dilemma: does his evangelical Christian faith represent an absolute truth, or is it one legitimate option among many?” (Ibid). This rhetorical move from notions of duality to plurality can take place when students consider audiences that don’t share their faith or beliefs about other issues such as abortion or global warming.

Such a rhetorical move follows the advice of the University of Texas at Arlington textbook requirements of writing a researched position paper that “indicates an understanding of other positions on the issue and explicates them fairly and accurately” (Wood ixiv.). In addition, students don’t have to deny their own selfhood or positions. They can be stated. The UTA custom textbook also advises: “Conceding certain points and/or sympathizing with alternative perspectives, the text [essay] offers a direct and thoughtful explanation about why it nonetheless retains its stated position, demonstrating an ability to determine and respond to subtle disagreements within broader arguments” (Ibid.). Students have “tried” on another discourse by conceding certain points or noting where other perspectives are valid. A student may maintain his or her position as long as one’s own viewpoints—and other perspectives of a different discourse community—are examined.

While Vander Lei argues that students are denied selfhood when religion is avoided, her larger argument is that religion should not be marginalized in the secular classroom as it is a cultural identity issue. Elizabeth Rand, author of

“Enacting Faith: Evangelical Discourse and the Discipline of Composition Studies,” would agree with Vander Lei in not denying to address religion in the classroom. Rand suggests that, for students, “spiritual identity may be the primary kind of selfhood more than a few of them draw upon in making meaning of their lives and the world around them” (“Enacting Faith” 350). But is it possible to view other perspectives on issues in a classroom without questioning one’s primary kind of selfhood? In a scholarly article, published while *Negotiating Religious Faith* was in press, Williams writes: “We are more willing to talk about race, gender, culture, or even social class, than we are to discuss religion” (“Taken on Faith” 515). Yet he notes that all of those cultural elements can be intertwined with religious beliefs and: “Rational or not, however, it is ridiculous to assume that we can keep issues of faith out of any classroom any more than we can bar other parts of students’ identities” (“Taken on Faith” 518). Indeed, this is further discussed in Chapter Three—how religion is intertwined with almost every other issue in the public sphere. So, it is difficult to not discuss it, especially in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, a subject also taken up in Chapter Three.

In addition to Williams’s assertion that matters of faith are not explicitly addressed in textbooks, other scholars insist instructors in the composition classroom often deflect religious subject matter. In addressing instructor treatment of religion when the issue arises in the classroom or crosses a teacher’s desk in the form of a

paper, Rand declares that academic discourse often marginalizes religion. Rand states:

[...] our own discourse at times trivializes and misrepresents faith-related expression. I consider how we can better serve students who write from what might be termed as “evangelical subjectivity.” A richer understanding is needed of the subject position behind much of the evangelical worldview. (“Enacting Faith” 350)

Ronda Leathers Dively, assistant professor at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale in 1997, published “Censoring Religious Rhetoric in the Composition Classroom: What We and Our Students Might be Missing” and “The Religious Rhetor in the Secular Academy: Identifying and Transcending Discursive Boundaries.” Dively relates that instructors may place the topic of religion on lists of “forbidden subject matter” and that, in her experience with discussions amongst faculty and students:

[...] although the postmodern academy publicly denounces unreflective marginalization of students’ voices, their voices are frequently marginalized in the composition classroom when issues of religion or spirituality arise” (“Religious Rhetor” 45).

She suggest that instructors may operate on the assumptions that the texts of inexperienced writers attempting to tackle religion will be “reductive and dogmatic” (Ibid.) or dualistic (“Censoring Religious Rhetoric” 56) which she describes as the “tendency to comprehend the world in oppositions and polarities” referencing Fell’s description of “saints and sinners, the saved and the damned, the wise and the foolish, the good and the evil, the angels and demons, the creator and creatures...” (“Explorations into Linguistic Practice” 8).

Another scholar speaking on dualism is Peggy Catron, a former minister and communications faculty member at “a large land-grant university” (“Blinking in the Sunlight” 66). Catron’s article “Blinking in the Sunlight: Exploring the Fundamentalist Perspective” is included in the compilation of essays in *Encountering Faith in the Classroom: Turning Difficult Discussions into Instructive Engagement*. Catron explains that dualism is a foundation of fundamentalism. She states:

The main tenets of fundamentalism, including the inerrancy doctrine and the literal interpretation of scripture, are grounded in a dualistic worldview, and since a primary goal of higher education is to help the student move beyond simplistic dualism into higher levels of intellectual development, the tension is not likely to go away. (“Blinking in the Sunlight” 68)

She allows that the goal of the academic classroom is to entertain multiplicity, or multiple viewpoints “a position where students come to realize there are many different and perhaps valid perspectives that must be examined” (Ibid.). Catron quotes W.G. Perry’s book *Forms of Ethical and Intellectual Development in the College Years* in noting that an essential feature of fundamentalism is dependent “on authoritarian structures” that “leads to entrenchment in a dualistic view of the world. In this world, morality leads to unquestioning obedience” (Ibid.). But Dively insists students can move beyond polarizing perceptions of good and evil to engage in “painstaking critical analysis” (“Censoring Religious Rhetoric” 58). Dively explains that this can be done when students step back from positions of faith, preaching, proselytizing or other attempts to convert the reader. She offers an

example of a student who wrote a paper analyzing different baptism rituals practiced by various Christian denominations and the Bible passages in which those rituals were grounded. She indicates the student's essay did "demonstrate a keen sense of his presumably diverse, academic audience" (Ibid.). Catron offers the remedy of Perry's notion of extending "potential legitimacy to 'otherness'" (Perry 79). However, Catron states that some students may not be able to perform this task as they have "the tendency to view anyone who offers an alternative vantage point as blind to the truth and a moral threat" ("Blinking in the Sunlight" 68). Catron describes being raised with a Christian fundamentalist viewpoint and conveys the apprehension she experienced when considering attending college. She feared a corruption of her faith from considering "the ideas of men" as potentially hampering her salvation ("Blinking in the Sunlight" 69). So, she attended a ministerial college instead. However, in her career leading up to teaching a secular university communications course, Catron states that her faith has been considerably modified ("Blinking in the Sunlight" 72). She advocates creating a safe space for students to consider multiple viewpoints as modeled by the instructor during class or office hours. "When students perceive faculty as close-minded and dismissive of students' views, this modeling cannot occur," she states, noting "[...] If the fear of moving beyond dualism is too great, and no 'safe space' is available, the student may simply shut down and retreat" (Ibid.).



Another scholar, Priscilla Perkins, in “A Radical Conversion of the Mind: Fundamentalism, Hermeneutics, and the Metanoic Classroom” claims that composition instructors slight “conservative Christians,” stating that they “are one of the only cultural groups openly and comfortably disparaged by many otherwise sensitive writing teachers in the country” and she largely blames “churches’ taboos against “independent interpretation”” (“A Radical Conversion” 586) for clashes in an academic setting that insists on inquiry. Much of recent scholarship calling for fair treatment of religious beliefs in the secular classroom is anecdotal and based on individual case studies. This scholarship often focuses on religious fundamentalist branches that embrace literal interpretations of texts as these perceptions will often be the most resistance to inquiry. Perkins explains:

Teachers respond negatively to students who do not tolerate viewpoints or modes of living different than their own, and they do not know how to teach critical thinking and argumentation to students whose approach to textual authority runs so counter to mainstream cultural literacies. Teacher prejudice, then, is not an irrational reaction to cultural difference, but a simultaneously political and intellectual distrust with tangible causes. (Ibid.)

Perkins does recognize here that instructors don’t necessarily react negatively to certain cultural groups per se, but to certain rigid ideas, to students demonstrating intolerance to perspectives that differ from their own. Of course, student resistance to inquiry of their own ideas isn’t solely found among religious beliefs, but among many other identity markers as well. Shannon Carter describes how instructors may feel intolerant of intolerance, noting how evangelical Christianity functions

“rhetorically, ideologically, practically—in many ways that appear completely and irreconcilably at odds with my pedagogical and scholarly goals” (“Living Inside the Bible (Belt)” 572). She explains that belief systems requiring conversion are “completely dependent upon the acceptance that the speaker’s own subject position is far from ‘partial’ or ‘socially situated’ but rather universal, right—and above all—true” (Ibid.).

The notion of discourse as socially situated is significant. Chris Anderson, in paraphrasing John Trimbur allows that “[...] all language is recognized as intended, all acts of discourse as determined by place and time, as the products of a very delicate transaction among the writer, the reader, the subject, and the scene of writing” (“Description of an Embarrassment” 21). Anderson states: “The point is that no kind of language should be seen as necessarily superior to another and that effective teaching and writing are always self-aware, in the act of examining their own assumptions” (Ibid.). This notion collapses hierarchies of discourse communities. Anderson claims that this notion can be applied to writing on religious discourse “that all experience is seen as ‘text’ to be interpreted, that literature is not defined as a sacred canon, and that composition is recognized as part of a wide spectrum of ‘textual studies,’ equal in importance to the others” (Ibid.). Anderson’s response is largely referencing an incident of a teaching assistant taking offense to a composition student writing a Christian testimonial in an essay, what he refers to as a “born-again” paper (“Description” 22). He notes that scholars can be “absolutist in

their antiabsolutism, blind, like my teaching assistant, to their own bias” (“Description” 21) and that critical methods become “dogmatic” and can acquire their own “moral force” (Ibid.).

Some scholars insist that the university classroom marginalizes religion as a topic. Shannon Carter states that: “The fact remains that many evangelical students find the academy openly hostile to their faith-based ways of knowing, being, and expressing themselves” (“Living Inside” 573). She suggests, that likewise instructors are not to be blamed for having their hackles raised at signs of intolerance since “evangelical discourse seems openly hostile to already marginalized groups (homosexuals, women, those of non-Christian faiths, for example)” (Ibid.). Bérubé claims, that on various topics, “The challenge, however, lies in making reasonable accommodation for students whose standards of reasonableness are significantly different from yours” (*What’s Liberal?* 19). However, while Bérubé states that he has tolerance for religious issues that crop up, he has less tolerance for “some forms of social conservatism” (23). For example, “Cultural conservatives of the sort who feel oppressed because their classroom environments do not always permit them to say that homosexuality is a sin and/or a curable disease will surely find my classrooms less than ideal” (Ibid.). In this instance religion can be an underpinning of a political issue which Bérubé acknowledges. When it comes to critical thinking, religion should be able to be defined and critiqued as all other issues. Bérubé states: “And insofar as it places additional moral burdens on certain kinds of conservatives

whose opposition to homosexuality stems from deeply held religious belief, yes, this kind of critical thinking can appear to such students to be a form of prejudice itself’ (Ibid.). He further explicates:

This conundrum, forged in the gap between procedural liberalism’s openness to debate and substantiate liberalism’s opposition to racism, sexism, and homophobia, seems to me one of the most difficult moral and intellectual quandaries any liberal teacher has to face. In the ‘political correctness’ debates of yesteryear, it sometimes took the form of the mind-bending charge that liberals were the truly intolerant forces in American society, because they failed to tolerate certain forms of intolerance that were grounded in conservative religious belief. (23-24)

This is when students find their beliefs may be questioned in the classroom, especially when their religious beliefs are intertwined with racial and sexual issues. In addition, other issues crop up as well. For example, one of my students insisted his faith embraced global warming as a hoax and he wanted to support his claim with biblical verses on humanity being given dominion over the Earth and its animals. He discovered however, that the Bible verses did not specifically address global warming, and he said his argument couldn’t be formulated like he expected it would.

## 2.6 Inquiry confronts affirmation in academic discussions of religion

Ironically, some instructors are decrying the marginalization of religion when in some cases (as Shannon Carter and Bérubé indicate) it is some religious tenets that marginalize other groups. Douglas Downs states that there is a conflict between the “real scholar” and “true believer” (“True Believers” 41) between “inquiry” and “affirmation” (Ibid.). Downs’s article “True Believers, Real Scholars, and Real True

Believing Scholars: Discourses of Inquiry and Affirmation in the Composition Classroom” is also included in the book *Negotiating Religious Faith*. He describes his own “intolerance” to a student’s paper that professed religious views in decrying gay parents adopting children (“True Believers” 39). He states: “One of the greatest challenges in negotiating religious faith in writing classes is helping students whose faith precludes inquiry learning to be inquiringly faithful” (Ibid.) meaning that students should engage in questioning religious issues and doctrine. Downs recommends a Rogerian method of stating student’s beliefs back to them, and then explaining the difference between affirmation and inquiry (49). The Rogerian method is based on Carl Rogers’s theories of communication that involves listening to an opponent and stating their argument back to them objectively as possible. Empathy is important “and a specific kind of listening—listening to understand from another’s point of view” is integral to this form of communication, according to Barnett (*Teaching Argument in the Composition Course: Background Readings* 97). Downs states that teachers “who receive dogmatic arguments struggle with impatience, disagreement, and even dejection with those arguments” (Ibid.). He expresses that although he received other papers with weak arguments, it was the paper on religion that “pushed my buttons” because of what Shannon Carter describes as [...] “a gap that liberal academics and evangelical Christians may find impossible to traverse—intolerable, in fact” (“Living Inside” 573). Carter also speaks of conversion as a method employed to convert students writing on religion to

a scholarly approach. She states: “So, too, it seems my goals as an educator has often been to ‘save’ my openly religious students ‘from themselves’” (Ibid.). Carter, however, resolves this by approaching religion as a discourse that is addressed in Chapter Four. She views religion as a literacy of a discourse community. She asserts: “Literacy thus becomes both a set of socially sanctioned, community-based “skills” and content that is validated, produced, and reproduced within that same community of practice” (“Living Inside” 579). Religion has its own discourse communities. The challenge is engaging with it by employing a rhetorical dexterity in an academic setting of inquiry—re-examining religion through the lens of another discourse community.

Some scholars don’t state why religion is barred from the classroom. They just state that this situation occurs. For example, another writer in *Negotiating Religious Faith*, Brad Peters, relates how a Writing Center tutor discouraged an African American student from citing the Bible and God in a paper arguing against capital punishment. The tutor stated “Some T.A.s [Teacher Assistants] won’t even accept a paper when students quote the Bible or mention God” (123). Peters asserts that the student’s discourse patterns were sermon-like but he insists that strategies do exist that could have bolstered the student’s argument academically. Peters’ essay focuses on African American Christians that he characterizes with engaging in a community discourse influenced by “faith-based literacy events in church such as memorizing Bible verses, reading scripture aloud, interpreting hymns, and

participating in sermons as a community text” (“African American Students of Faith” 121).

While some scholars insist that religious beliefs are marginalized in the classroom, others announce their personal faith in their scholarly works.

#### 2.7 Some scholars announce their faith in their published works

In the fourteen scholarly essays in *Negotiating Religious Faith*, five of the authors announce their own religious affiliations (Smart, Evangelical Christian, later complicated by her identity as a lesbian; Williams, Quaker; Hansen, Mormon; Perkins, self-described as “a critical leftist Catholic” and Lauren-Fitzgerald, Catholic). In addition, co-editor Vander Lei states in the introductory notes that she teaches at Calvin College and that “The college is owned by a Christian denomination, and as an institution, attempts to enact its motto, ‘My heart I offer, Lord, promptly and sincerely’” (5) and she allows that “faith shapes institutional practice” from admissions, to pedagogy and curriculum (Ibid.) but regardless of the type of higher education institution (religious affiliated or not), issues of religion can come up in the secular classroom and that some students “carry faith as unexamined warrants” (7). In a separate, and more recently published paper (2013), Ringer announces that he is an evangelical Christian (“The Consequences of Integrating Faith” 273). In speaking as a writing adviser to a student (with the pseudonym of “Austin”), who was writing a paper comparing schools affiliated with religion with public schools, Ringer states:

Given my own evangelical background, I could appreciate Austin's frustration. And because I attended a private Christian college before matriculating to two different state universities for graduate school, I knew firsthand the difficulties associated with trying to make sense of one's faith in a secular academic setting. I knew, too, how difficult it was to argue for deeply held beliefs while enacting an academic discourse that, in Anne Gere's words, features an "impoverished" set of terms for doing so (46). Because Austin's audience did not share his faith, I knew he would need to find a means of persuasion outside of the evangelical Christian discourse he knew so well as a faithful member of an evangelical campus ministry and local church. (Ibid.)

While not all scholars writing essays on negotiating faith in the classroom cite their personal beliefs, it is interesting that some do. Williams states that writing teachers

[...] by interrogating their own backgrounds and assumptions of faith, rhetoric and truth, can engage with students in a reflective, critical, and constructive manner, the goal of which is not conflict-free multicultural pluralism, but instead simply continuing an engaged cross-cultural dialogue. (*Negotiating Faith* 106)

However, instructors can maintain engaged cross-cultural dialogue by simply negotiating an environment that favors academic inquiry. Divulging personal positions on any issue can be detrimental. Williams himself states: "Discourse is indeed power, and those who control the discourse of religion in a deeply religious culture can control political and social power" ("The Book and the Truth" 113). He does not state whether or not he shares his faith affiliation with students. However, students can discover Williams identifying as a Quaker by reading two of his published essays, "The Book and the Truth: Faith, Rhetoric and Cross-Cultural Communication" and "Taken on Faith: Religion and Identity in Writing Classes."



Instructors who state their positions on any issue are performing a sort of persuasion by asserting a viewpoint that students will view as the favored one, and one that they must take note of as it is the preferred perspective of the person who assigns course grades. Barbara A. Lea, in “Religion in the Classroom: Legal Issues” describes consequences for faculty members who might announce their religious beliefs in the classroom. She describes the situation: “In a few lawsuits, faculty members have been disciplined or discharged for injecting their views into classroom discussion. For the most part, the courts have upheld the right of the institution to limit or forbid a faculty member from discussing his or her views in the classroom” (108). In one case, a court ruled that “personal religious biases” should not affect course content (“Religion in the Classroom” 109). Lea said this resulted in causing “the university to forbid such discussions in courses” when it is perceived the discussions could be coercive (Ibid.). In one particular case a professor announced optional after-class meetings in which he spoke of “evidence of God in human physiology” (108). The court ruled that “Tangential to the authority over its curriculum, there lies some authority over the conduct of teachers in and out of the classroom that significantly bears on the curriculum or that gives the appearance of endorsement by the university” (109). Instructors should take caution about what is discussed outside of the classroom as well as inside of the classroom. Telling students to meet in office hours to discuss religion does not release discourse from liability or consequences. It is advisable that instructors would also think twice

before announcing religious affiliations in scholarship as students can use that information as fodder in insisting that biases exist. In the case addressed by Lea whereby the instructor held after-class meetings, the courts ruled “the students could perceive the ‘optional’ religious meetings as coercive, since they took place before the course was over” (109) (prior to final exams).

Bérubé describes himself as a “fairly opinionated and outspoken liberal-progressive writer outside the classroom” (3) who does not divulge his personal positions on issues, nor does he expect students to reveal their stances. Instead, he suggests that discussion and debate on topics can transpire in the classroom over conflicting topics. He states: “I keep most of my political opinions to myself when I enter the classroom [...] Nor do I pry into my students’ personal beliefs” (Ibid.). In addition, Bérubé plays devil’s advocate by asking questions in opposition of his own beliefs. He states: “I present interpretations I disagree with or actively dislike in order to present lesser-known sides of a ten-sided question, or simply to stir things up” (13). However, Bérubé has announced some of his stances in his scholarship. Perkins said she was led to announce her religious affiliation (Catholic) in a classroom when jokes were made about Catholicism (“A Radical Conversion” 589). She notes that no amount of inquiry into academic theories “had led me to set aside my religious identity” (Ibid.). Thus, she encourages questioning of religion with students, and she is cognizant of the humiliation of disparaging remarks. But she

might have stemmed the tide of classroom joking about one's religion without announcing her own faith affiliation.

It is not always evident from current scholarship if instructors inject their religious preferences into classroom dialogue. However, Catron states that she mentioned her ministerial background and some modifications of her faith over the years on one occasion when two students announced their religious beliefs during classroom introductions in a secular communications classroom ("Blinking in the Sunlight" 71). When a student asked, "Do you still believe?" she directed him to come visit her during office hours for further discussion. Catron asserts that if the student can identify with the instructor then the dualistic boundaries of "us" and "them" may dissolve (74). She states that: "For many students, and especially fundamentalist students, relationship often precedes learning" (78). Catron advocates a willingness to "reveal our own struggles with faith and intellectual development" (75). Nonetheless, it would seem that instructors might maintain an open attitude towards students' beliefs without divulging personal religious beliefs or a lack of beliefs, thereof. Also, as previously noted, the instructor is not constitutionally protected to speak about personal religious beliefs during office hours. Removing the discussion from the classroom does not guarantee protection.

Taking a different strategy, some scholars indicate creating dissonance in the classroom and attempting to resolve it can be accomplished without divulging one's beliefs. Instructors introduce ideas and topics that challenge students' worldviews,

especially religious beliefs. Rosier alleges that this leads to students feeling conflicted or dissonant and they may outright reject information, “reduce its importance” or accept it in order to avoid feelings of dissonance (“What I Think I Believe” 78). She states, “Dissonance theory provides a useful framework for understanding and monitoring learning in the academic setting because learners need to make decisions regarding the new information that challenges their opinions and attitudes” (Ibid.). Students then have a choice of discarding new information or old information, and this is where learning can occur. This can transpire without an instructor announcing his or her beliefs in an effort to identify with students of belief. Rosier’s notion of creating and resolving cognitive dissonance in the classroom is an option for negotiating religion. She explains that there are five strategies students often engage in when experiencing cognitive dissonance due to new conflicting ideas: “1) reject the new information; 2) reduce the importance of the information; 3) add the new information to what they already know; 4) change the dissonant personal beliefs or information so the information is no longer inconsistent; or, 5) change their personal beliefs or information to reflect the information” (“What I Think I Believe” 79). Rosier allows that the first two strategies of rejecting information usually do not engage with critical thinking, that it is easy to disagree without first analyzing or reflecting upon ideas.

Sharon Crowley also advocates dissonance as a catalyst for change. She claims that people operating under a perception of single-mindedness become

entrenched in ideas that they are unlikely to change. She states that “single-mindedness is available to people who are either privileged and/or isolated from dissonance” (*Toward a Civil Discourse* 193). She references a Stanley Fish anecdote concerning a member of the Ku Klux Klan who experienced dissonance once he found out people identified as “defectives” included people with cleft palates, and his own daughter had a cleft palate. Crowley states: “This story provides an interesting example wherein a believer was jolted out of belief by sudden awareness of a contradiction between an ideologic [sic.] and a powerful emotion—his love for a daughter” (*Toward a Civil Discourse* 189). Crowley indicates that dissonance can create an opening for change, but only under circumstances laden with other variables including the “appearance of a persuasive moment” (*Toward* 190). She offers an example of dissonance not being effective for some Christians who find exceptions to the disconnecting moment. She states: “Christ’s failure to appear on earth has resulted in disappointment and disaffection for some apocalyptists, but others simply renew their efforts to determine the correct time of return” (*Ibid.*). In this case, new information has been denied or rejected in favor of engagement with previous information.

Other scholars writing on the intersections of religion and the composition classroom share their religious beliefs in published essays (Williams, Smart, Hansen, Lauren-Fitzgerald, Perkins, and O’Reilley). O’Reilley essentially uses her beliefs to inform her pedagogy. She said her religious influences include those of Roman

Catholic, Zen Buddhist, and Quaker. She states that in teaching English “Dogma is not relevant to my present purposes. What is relevant is discipline: a way of being in time that these traditions propose” (*The Peaceable Classroom* 73). Williams states that his belief system as a Quaker dovetails with a postmodern view and academic inquiry in that:

Quakerism also privileges human discussion and consensus as a way of reaching decisions and solving conflicts. There are no ministers in most Friends’ meetings, no official hierarchy to interpret the Bible or doctrine. Instead it is the individual, in contact with equal individuals, who comes to an interpretation. (“The Book and the Truth” 111)

It is difficult to know where Williams’ academic and religious ideologies part ways. He describes his ongoing semester discourse with a student of Islam who wrote a paper in favor of banning Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* (106). The instructor asserts: “If Rhetoric and Composition has been reluctant to address issues of faith in rhetoric and pedagogy in the Judeo-Christian tradition in the United States, it has been even more reticent toward issues of faith in multicultural settings and pedagogies” (105). However, Williams does not support this statement with evidence that religions outside of Judeo-Christian traditions are the most marginalized.

Indeed, religions outside of the Judeo-Christian realm may be less dogmatic and judgmental in some cases. Nonetheless, any religion (Judeo-Christian or otherwise) can have its absolutist claims. It is those religions that often call for conversion that are most often addressed in scholarly essays. Williams implies that

he shared his beliefs with the Islamic student. He does not explain where his perspectives on academic inquiry, and/or Quakerism influenced his discourse with the student. However, in discussing his conversation with the Islamic student Williams states:

Though our perspectives on free expression and the centrality of religion in society differed, with my multicultural goals of tolerance and compromise intact I hoped Mohammed and I could find a way to reach a mediated meeting of minds. Here was an opportunity for two reasonable people to engage in Habermas' "ideal discourse." ("The Book and the Truth" 111)

Williams doesn't make clear how much of the discourse involved his influence from Quaker beliefs, especially when he perceives that they embrace academic inquiry and he may just have been applying scholarly modes and "multicultural goals" of questioning rather than strategies of his faith. Nonetheless, the issue is that his faith is stated in his scholarship and students can be influenced by such information. It is also difficult to determine where his teaching philosophy and faith diverge.

Maxine Hairston, in voicing a concern for teachers' perspectives pervading the classroom on multicultural issues describes a model of teaching freshman writing that puts "dogma before diversity, politics before craft, ideology before critical thinking, and the social goals of the teacher before the educational needs of the students" ("Diversity, Ideology" 660), something that can occur if an instructor announces his or her religion to the class or to students writing on religion. In some of the cases discussed here, instructors announce their faith in their scholarship,

something easily accessible to students. Hairston's concern is when teachers make the multicultural topics the center of writing, promoting their own ideologies. She laments: "It is a vision that echoes that old patronizing rationalization we've heard so many times before: students don't have anything to write about so we have to give them topics. Those topics used to be literary, now they are political" (660). These topics can also be religious, often enmeshed with political issues. While Hairston cautions that ideological course themes can lead to instructors promoting their social goals, ideological issues will crop up in the writing course, especially those that teach debate and argument. Harriet Malinowitz insists that teaching disciplines that she would locate under the broad umbrella of "critical literacy" have emerged due to teaching writing on issues in the public sphere. She states:

Liberatory pedagogy, cultural studies, multiculturalism, and other socially based teaching practices took root in composition in the last decades of the twentieth century because reading, writing, rhetoric, language, and discourse came to be seen as constitutive, rather than merely descriptive, of events in the world ("The Uses of Literacy" 237).

In other words, discourse is the means by which the world is socially constructed. Tim Murphy claims that objects and perceptions of reality are not just mirrored, but constructed by individuals. He writes, "Neither language nor the mind is seen as a mirror which reflects the essential content of reality. Instead, both are seen as productive activities which construct the objects that they apprehend" ("Discourse" 400). Hairston claims required freshman writing courses "should not be *for* anything or *about* anything other than writing itself, and how one uses it to learn



and think and communicate” (“Diversity, Ideology” 659 *emphasis hers*). However, writing must be about something, and will usually be about a contested issue of the day in the composition course that requires a researched position paper.

John Trimbur contests Hairston’s call to keep the writing classroom as a “low-risk” environment. He states “I worry that Maxine’s program for a ‘low risk’ classroom reveals a predilection to look at differences as threatening, confrontational, and potentially violent” (“Responses to Maxine Hairston” 249) a perspective he blames on the media for perpetuating the polarization of issues. Trimbur further states that by not allowing students to engage in topics of conflict “The implicit message is that they can share their differences, but they shouldn’t have to engage in the rhetorical art of negotiation” (Ibid.) when it comes to certain issues. Robert G. Wood argues that teachers can instruct about contested topics without coercing students or using the classroom to “proselytize” (“Responses to Maxine Hairston” 250).

## 2.8 Conclusion

Composition instructors may encounter a problem in attempting to draw students away from proselytizing and to rather engage them in inquiry. This is the experience related by some scholars. While instructors may invite religion into the classroom, it doesn’t appear they do so as a matter to promote their own social goals, but rather do so in order to avoid silencing students. Some instructors grapple with religion when it crops up unexpectedly. Smart describes receiving a paper with a

Christian testimony from a student assigned to write a critical response to Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*. The paper was titled "Frankenstein or Jesus Christ?" Smart said the title raised red flags and brought up her own religious beliefs that are conflicted. Smart states:

The dualistic prompting of this essay's title sounds an alarm for me. While my own spirituality draws deeply from the ingrained teachings of an evangelical Christian upbringing, I have nevertheless been progressively engaged in a strong effort to sustain a life of faith that does not preclude my vital consciousness and life as a lesbian. The student's rhetoric invokes the church language with the anti-gay curses of my youth, distancing me and threatening to cloud my evaluation of the essay. ("Frankenstein or Jesus Christ?" 11)

While Smart's honesty about her preconceived notions going into the reading of the essay is laudable, it is these type of notions we are asking students to avoid in approaching contested issues, and is precisely what we hope to ask them to disentangle. Smart states that she tried to put her own beliefs aside and that there were initial signs of "fruitful possibilities" in the student's statement that he intended to compare "two beings who experienced similar persecution as a result of their creator's choice to forsake them" ("Frankenstein" 12). However, the essay later turns to what Smart describes as "fundamentalist moralizing" (Ibid.). Smart infers that she is following Anderson's injunction to examine one's own faith before engaging students instead of silencing students on the topic ("Frankenstein" 14) in order to "legitimize the faith-centered voices of our students" (Ibid.). Smart also underscores an understanding of those who feel compelled to announce their religion and to profess faith publically, to "witness." Yet, students can be shown rhetorical power

without witnessing or professing their faith publically, a rhetorical act that can be modeled by the instructor. Rand explains that Smart acknowledges how religious beliefs can negatively shape the instructor's response to student writing. In fact, Smart alleges, "we need to interrogate the beliefs we espouse in both the real and rhetorical situations we share with our students" (22).

However, interrogating one's own beliefs may not be necessary in order to gain an understanding of a student's perspective. Allowing students to know the instructor's perspective on any given contested issue is not necessary in order to "interrogate" issues of a rhetorical situation. The divulgence of the instructor's perspective is not only unnecessary, but could result in detrimental consequences of student disengagement or worse, retaliation through grade disputes on religious grounds. Bérubé allows, although he is agnostic, "I never speak ill of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, or any organized religion, so there is no sense in which any religious student should feel that he or she has to argue twice in my classroom" (*What's Liberal?* 23). Yet, some scholars announce their faith (or like Bérubé a lack of belief) in academic publications, and some textbook editors, who are also scholars and instructors, take a stance on religion through a rhetoric of affirmation via contextual materials surrounding essays that address religion (as is discussed especially concerning the textbooks *The Presence of Others*). While Martin Luther King, Jr., and other authors of readers often announce their faith in their writings, textbook editor John J. Ruszkiewicz also announced his faith (Catholic) in editorial

notes. It would be no surprise that there could be spillage of this type of affirmative discussion, provided by instructors, into the classroom environment. However, most scholars writing on the intersections of religion and writing are searching for more strategies for instructors to engage with issues of faith in dialogue.

One group of people adamant about keeping religion out of the classroom is not instructors, but rather some conservative Republicans. Bérubé includes a January 2005 newspaper report concerning Ohio State Senator Larry Mumper calling for a bill that “would prohibit instructors at public or private universities from ‘persistently’ discussing controversial issues in class or from using their classes to push political, ideological, religious or anti-religious views” (*What’s Liberal?* 26). Bérubé states Mumper defines “controversial issues” as “religion and politics” (27). Banning politics from classroom discussion would cross over into many disciplines at a university. As Bérubé indicates, such enforcement would be “Bad news for political science, history, philosophy, sociology, and religion departments, but good news for people who would prefer universities devoted largely to sports and weather” (28). Religion is often more inflammatory than politics however, though it does crop up in the same disciplines that Bérubé mentions since it can hardly be released from (or left out of) wars, social movements or history.

Published in 2009 in large part as a response to the scholarship calling for more engagement with religious topics, is the Longman topics reader solely comprised of religious selections “*Religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*” Editor Jonathan S.

Cullick references quotes from *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom*, and Rand in the preface. Cullick states that “religious discourse might be a resource that we have overlooked” (xi.) that students can be intellectually engaged in the world and that faith may be enmeshed in that engagement (Ibid.). Cullick relates: “As teachers of writing, questioning our student’s faith lies outside the scope of our role, but questioning their use of faith as an act of rhetoric is our responsibility” (xiii.). His textbook includes readings that question faith, personal narratives of belief and disbelief, and excerpts from texts considered sacred, as well as those that are science-based. In the introduction, Cullick encourages students to “be curious” (xx.). He states: “Learning does not happen when you are presented with ideas or opinions you already possess; it happens when you are offered new concepts and perspectives” (xx.-xi.). He also adds that considering other perspectives can alter one’s initial beliefs but can also deepen understanding about one’s own beliefs (xxii.). He encourages instructors to negotiate religion in the classroom. He states: “Whether we are adherents of religions different from our students’ or adherents of no religion at all, we must become mindful of the ways in which our position as faculty constructs our response” (xi.). Ringer however, speaks of consequences for students to question their beliefs. In a case study of a student named Austin (a pseudonym) writing a research paper on “Christian Schools vs. Public Schools” (“Integrating Faith” 272) Ringer states that the student had to “face a key epistemological dilemma: does his evangelical Christian faith represent

absolute truth, or is it one legitimate option among many?” (273). Ringer adds, “In William Perry’s terms, Austin’s writing of ‘Christian Schools’ causes him to account for the legitimacy of pluralism within his primarily dualistic framework” (ibid). Ringer described evangelicals as “Christians who believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, emphasize the importance of conversion, believe in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and seek to share their faith” (274). Believing the Bible is the Word of God is an element of dualism, according to Barker. Barker, speaking from the background of an evangelical who later became an atheist, states that he was appalled as an evangelical to learn of Christians who accepted the story of Adam and Eve as metaphorical rather than historical. This is because Barker said he thought that his faith meant that everything must be viewed through a dualistic lens of black and white, or right and wrong (*Godless* 33). Barker states:

I was shocked by this kind of talk. Liberal talk. The fundamentalist mindset does not allow this latitude. To the fundamentalist there is no gray area. Everything is black or white, true or false, right or wrong. Jesus reportedly said: “I wish that you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:15-16). (ibid)

Barker adds that some biblical fundamentalists reject shades of gray concerning metaphors or parables existing in the Bible. He notes a discrepancy, however stating, “When Jesus said ‘I am the door’ we did not think he had hinges or a doorknob” (*Godless* 34). Nonetheless, Barker suggests that some fundamentalists reject “gray talk—relativistic, situational, provisional, tentative” (ibid) as he writes that he was encouraged to do as a practicing fundamentalist.

Also published during the time frame (2008-2009) of the textbook solely on the topic of religion—*Religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, is *Encountering Faith in the Classroom: Turning Difficult Discussions into Constructive Engagement* with thirteen essays on negotiating religious faith in the classroom. Diamond and Copre insist that “Religion in the secular classroom is a hot topic on today’s campuses, one that is becoming increasingly consequential” (*Encountering Faith* xv.). The book was largely a response to educators collaborating in July 2005 to find ways to engage in dialogue on religion that was already transpiring in the public square, according to Thomas and Bahr (also published in *Encountering Faith*). They state: “We shared concerns about how little Americans seem to know about their own religion [...] and whether to respond to interest a majority of students evince in including a spiritual dimension to their learning” (“Faith and Reason” 3). The scholars evidence the public interest in religion with a 2003 Harris Poll whereby nearly ninety percent of Americans polled “said they believe in God or a higher authority” (“Faith and Reason” 5). In addition, the scholars claim a surge in the interest of religion since the tragedy of September 11, 2001 (xix.), the incident of attack on targets located in the United States by attackers claiming religious motivations including engagement in a “holy war.” While these scholars indicate an upswing in interests in religion since Sept. 11, 2001, half of the sixteen top titles began I examine began including religion as its own topic chapter, set aside from other chapters from 1998 to 2008. However, four of those eight textbooks removed their chapters on religion by 2012.

Nonetheless, in 2012, many of the textbooks still contained text and articles on religion, just not located in a separate chapter. Even with removing some religion chapters, the 2012 textbook editions contain one-hundred-and-fifteen images and texts that address religion.

It is clear when excerpts from the Bible and the Koran are present in composition textbooks as well as in directions to students to “narrate a prayer,” (Lunsford 1994 207) or to offer “examples or reasons or proof” “to support or refute” that God overcomes evil (Lunsford 1997 160) that matters of faith do reside in secular textbooks. In some cases, matters of religion are discussed in the readings. In other cases, religion is addressed through editorial apparatuses such as introductions, editorial annotations, notes, and response questions. In a few cases inquiry is addressed, such as questions that compare some stories of creation to myth. However, in many cases religion goes without saying as completely unaddressed, or in other cases it is affirmed in editorial apparatuses. Much of the scholarship in recent years would indicate that religion isn’t present in textbooks, and that it is marginalized in classrooms. Classroom presentation or engagement with religion goes beyond the scope of this study. It is interesting, however, that some scholars calling for ways to negotiate religion in the secular composition classroom announce their religious affiliations that can be viewed as a form of persuasion, affirmation or caretaking of religious tradition. This is what McCutcheon would describe as taking on the role of “ideological managers” (*Critics Not Caretakers*



142). The problem is religion is already in the textbooks and instructors have to choose strategies for engagement or non-engagement. Some teachers take a stance of “You can read about it, just not write about religion” when research topic papers are open-ended. Why present religion in textbooks in readings for engagement, but bar it from writing? As Mark Montesano states: “If we do not provide opportunities for students to actively engage their belief systems in writing classrooms—where we encourage the use of critical lenses, then we implicitly tell students that religion should not be subjected to critical analysis” (“Religious Faith” 85). Between avoiding religion altogether on one hand, and affirming it on the other, Shannon Carter offers a middle ground of studying religion as a discourse by first reading, understanding and manipulating “the cultural and linguistic codes of a new community of practice (Lave and Wenger) based on a relatively accurate assessment of another, more familiar one” (“Living Inside the Bible (Belt)” 574). Carter calls this approach “rhetorical dexterity” which asks students “to think of literacy in terms more conducive to maintaining both their faith-based and their academic literacies without being required to substitute one for the other” (Ibid.). This may prevent students from becoming defensive, but does it go far enough into inquiry? This is examined more closely in Chapter Four.

Montesano states that inquiry is a necessity. He suggests that discourse can be considered “normal” by students when it is accepted in a particular discourse community. He states: “Across discourse communities, though, discourse can be

considered ‘abnormal’ because it does not fit the shared faith, beliefs, and assumptions of one of the communities” (“Religious Faith” 86). In this case, even if the discourse is one of religion, or maybe especially if the discourse is that of religion, it is open to questioning. A problem with questioning, however, arises when a student does not have a good knowledge base of religion, especially a familiarity with original sources. Montesano notes that discussion breaks down when students don’t have a knowledgeable background of their own religions. He asks “How does one make up for that deficiency in a semester of English?” (87). This is a deficiency that can’t be resolved in a matter of weeks, meaning that many papers on religion will need to be written on a case-by-case basis. This however, resolves the issue of banning or avoiding the topic of religion altogether. In some cases students can negotiate the topic having both a knowledgeable base and a willingness to question assumptions, or at least to entertain alternate viewpoints. A student should first have cultivated a literacy in the religion he or she expects to write about before tackling any other issues involving religion in the academic arena. Or the student should at least be willing to research the sources of his or her religious beliefs.

So, in essence, religion does exist in textbooks and does crop up in the classroom, especially according to the prevalence of religion in secular composition textbooks, and to the indications of various scholars that teach composition. In some cases, scholars announce their own religious affiliations in their scholarship, and in one case an instructor said she did not hesitate to announce her own struggles with

religion in the classroom when rude remarks were made about her beliefs. Chapter Four describes approaching religion as a discourse. Chapter Three explores how religion is intertwined with many issues in the public sphere and why some scholars are calling for it to be addressed in the university classroom as well as in the public arena. In addition, what is taught in the classroom spills into the public sphere.

## Chapter 3

### The Call for Religious Literacy in the Classroom

#### 3.1 Public media is tied to religion in textbooks, especially after 9-11

Some instructors insist that religion comes through the door of the classroom via the students when they are asked to grapple with topics from the public sphere. Students also read articles published in university composition textbooks that originate in the public media. This is nothing new, as textbooks are often comprised of reprinted essays, speeches, and other written or oral texts from the public realm. However, religion is often enmeshed in issues that arise from the American media, and topics entangled with religion are on the increase according to some scholars. Richard E. Miller, writing in “Teaching After September 11” asks how teachers in the humanities are contributing to “producing a citizenry that is so woefully ill-informed about world religions” (253). He also asks: “What have we done to prepare students to live in a less-than-ideal world, a world of seemingly insoluble problems?” (ibid). Miller states:

We can look at the world after September 11 and conclude that we got here because powerful interests have colluded to thwart the weak; or we can recognize that the humanities, in general, and writing programs, in particular, have contributed to producing future leaders and laborers who are ill-prepared to think and act on a political stage where alliances are fluid and ideals and commitments get negotiated and re-negotiated in the moment. (Ibid.).

Miller grants substantial responsibility to writing or composition programs to teach students to engage in different communities of discourse. One solution explored in detail is described in Chapter Four, whereby Shannon Carter’s strategy

of treating religion as a discourse is examined. Miller advises instructors to engage students in proposing “viable solutions to the insoluble problems of the twenty-first century” (254). Some problems often seem insoluble when they become enmeshed with issues of religion, often addressing concepts of mystery and faith without evidence. Miller addresses the intentions of teaching argument. He states: “In the humanities, so defined, the goal is to show students the human dimension of *all* knowledge and to train them how to read, write, think, create, and imagine in a world where all solutions are provisional and subject to change without notice” (255 *emphasis his*). Teaching students that the rhetorical situation is provisional according to the circumstances surrounding a particular issue (and that audiences/communities of discourse differ) is essential in a composition course that requires students to write a researched position paper that reveals and considers multiple perspectives.

As religion is already intertwined with many issues of the day, and often arrives in textbooks, instructors need strategies to assist students engaging with a topic that can contain absolutist ideas. This is especially problematic when students want to write on religion-related topics when they don’t have a working knowledge of world religions or various perspectives of religion. Therefore, the call for religious literacy in the classroom by some scholars is valid. Instructors often decide whether or not students can engage with religion in their papers, and in classroom discussion, as well as how it can be addressed. There is often instructor apprehension in negotiating religion because of its constitutional issues regarding the separation of

church and state that is addressed in a later section of this chapter. One of the ways that textbooks bring religion into the classroom is through offering essays and articles from the public arena. Readings in textbooks often arrive from the public sphere through texts that first appeared in the media such as magazines, newspapers, talk shows, and public lectures. Bloom agrees that many essays included in textbooks are often selected from the daily news. In analyzing a database comprised of fifty years (1946-1996) of a sampling of university composition textbook anthologies, she states (writing in 1999):

No matter where an essay first appeared—in the *New Yorker* or a little magazine or on a newspaper’s op-ed page—if it is to survive in the hearts and minds of the twentieth century American reading public it must be reprinted time and again in a composition Reader. (“The Essay Canon” 401)

Bloom does not examine a sampling of the best-selling textbooks over a specific time period similar to this project, but rather she explores authors with the most reprinted essays; “those [authors] whose works have been reprinted 100 or more times” during the fifty-year span contained in the database that she analyzes. Her research of the composition textbook anthology database indicates that 175 authors have emerged as “canonical” (“Once More to the Essay Canon” 92). Some of these authors’ essays first appeared in magazines, sometimes in Christian magazines or in Christian television media. One example of how a text moves from public media to the textbook, according to Bloom’s research, is Brent Staples’ article “Black Men and Public Space.” The essay was first printed in *Harper’s* magazine in

December 1986. It was reprinted in university composition textbooks with Readers forty-eight times between 1983-1996 (“The Essay Canon” 410). This is not a reading that engages with religion. It is merely an example of a text moving from the public sphere into academia.

In this project, one example of a text—that engages with religion from the public sector—is written by talk show host, author, and film critic, Michael Medved. “Hollywood Poison Factory” first was published in the magazine *Imprimis*. It was later published in the third edition of Katherine Anne Ackley’s *Perspectives on Contemporary Issues: Readings Across the Disciplines* (2003), one of the top sixteen textbook titles in this project. In the article, Medved laments that films are “morally and spiritually empty” (212). In addition, the movie critic cites “Hollywood’s antireligious bias” and claims films often bash religion. So, in this case the discussion of religion is placed in a textbook from a magazine article first published in a national magazine.

Public concern about religion has indeed intruded into the classroom, and comes in the door with students, instructors, and textbooks. It shouldn’t be surprising that textbooks reflect the prevailing notions and discussions of the day, especially when articles from newspapers and magazines are included as readings. So, once again instructors are asked to negotiate the topic of religion in the classroom, often without suggested response questions that engage with religion as something that could be questioned. For example, the questions following Medved’s

article “Hollywood Poison Factory,” largely ignore the question of religion. One question does entwine religion with family values. Question Number Three asks “What is your response to Medved’s allegation that Hollywood films reveal antireligion [sic.] and antifamily biases?” (216). The textbook draws from Medved’s statement “Religion isn’t Hollywood’s only target; the traditional family has also received surprisingly harsh treatment from today’s movie moguls” (214). Medved actually makes more interesting statements decrying the treatment of institutionalized religion in films and (213) and asks why characters in dire situations don’t invoke the name of God, especially during hospital scenes in movies. He professes, “I guarantee you that just as there are no atheists in foxholes, there are no atheists in operating rooms—only in Hollywood” (214).

Atheists in the university classroom might disagree. One student in my classroom related an instance of turning away clergy when he was visited by them in a hospital room, even though the student was in critical condition. And those who agree with Medved might rather write on issues of belief. Having a background or literacy on religions would assist the student as Medved’s article mentions Pentecostals, Catholics, Protestants, and Judaism (213). The point is that religious faiths and belief are addressed in the textbook reading but not in the questions, leaving students and instructors to negotiate with some of the most controversial statements in the text without a sense of direction in an essay intended to foster debate and critical thinking.



Medved's article is not reprinted in other textbooks. This brings up the question of reception or rejection. Was it no longer printed due to the fact that it wasn't used in classrooms, an issue that is discussed in Chapter One? Some texts from the public sphere that address religion, however, are reprinted frequently. For example, ranking number eight as an author with the top number of reprints in the databases (analyzed by Bloom) is Martin Luther King Jr. His "Letter From Birmingham Jail" was first published in excerpt format May 19, 1963 in the *New York Post* (Bass 140). Bloom states "Letter From Birmingham Jail" was reprinted in composition textbooks 50 times between 1967 and 1996. In the fifty-nine textbooks in this study, King's letter was reprinted in twenty-five of those university composition readers from 1973 to 2012. His well-known "Letter From Birmingham Jail" first appeared in the media and has been canonized in composition and literature textbooks.

In the fourth edition of *Perspectives on Contemporary Issues* (2006)—another textbook in this project—is the article by David Brooks "One Nation, Enriched by Biblical Wisdom," that "discusses the controversy over school children reciting the phrase 'One nation under God' in the Pledge of Allegiance" (vii.). The article first appeared in the *New York Times* newspaper on March 23, 2004. The point is that contemporary texts from the media will often be enmeshed with religion, as it has become a part of many issues in public discussion. Brooks insists that education on sacred texts would be beneficial to understanding arguments in the

public square. He states: “Whether the topic is welfare, education, the regulation of biotechnology or even the war on terrorism, biblical wisdom may offer something that secular thinking does not—not pat answers, but a way to think about things” (“One Nation Under God” 324). He adds that prayer should not be permitted in public schools “but maybe theology should be mandatory” (Ibid.). This suggests that, because religion is enmeshed with other issues, Americans need to have a working knowledge of it. Brooks concludes: “From this perspective, what gets recited in the pledge is the least important issue before us. Understanding what the phrase ‘one nation under God’ might mean—that’s the important thing. That’s not proselytizing: it’s citizenship” (Ibid.). However, it’s challenging to decide what “one nation under God” might mean without defining a deity and delving into other issues of religion. One elementary school teacher goes over the “Pledge of Allegiance” and defines it word by word in terms that younger students could understand. Thus, the “Pledge of Allegiance” becomes more than a jumble of memorized words. The teacher defined each word and states that God is a given as existing.

### 3.2 Textbook editors include articles of religion from the public sphere

Some authors and scholars decry the nation’s ignorance of world religions. Bill McKibben, in the seventh edition of the textbook *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing* (2007), takes American Christians to task for their stances on economic, social and environmental issues that he asserts contradict the teachings of the Bible. *Rereading America* is another book in this

study. Located in the chapter “One Nation Under God: American Myths of Church and State” is McKibben’s article “The Christian Paradox: How a Faithful Nation Gets Jesus Wrong.” In the article, reprinted from the August 2005 edition of *Harper’s* magazine (another example of the media entering textbooks), McKibben states:

[...] it occurred to me that the parts of the world where people actually had cut dramatically back on their carbon emissions, actually did live voluntarily in smaller homes and take public transit, were the same countries where people were giving aid to the poor and making sure everyone had health care—countries like Norway and Sweden, where religion was relatively unimportant. How could that be? (670)

For McKibben, various civic issues can be linked to a sacred text and are done so in the public sphere. One question following his essay asks “What evidence does McKibben offer to support his claim that the United States does not live up to its professed Christian ideals?” (675). Another question directs students to the “Gospels” to read in groups to “test McKibben’s portrayal of Jesus and his teachings” (676). So, issues considered of public interest in this case clearly lead students to exploring a perceived sacred text, necessary if they are to wrestle with the issues presented in the essay and in this particular issue of public discourse. It is surprising that such an article, one that directs students to a sacred text, exists in a secular university composition textbook. However, such issues of religion intertwined with other relevant topics of the day are prevalent in public discussion, and many texts from the media have made their way into university composition textbooks.

Another example of a reading entering a composition textbook (in this study) is from public discourse that combines relevant issues of the day with religion. Eric Marcus is the author of “The Bridge Builder: Kathleen Boatwright” in the seventh edition of *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*. His article was transcribed from the collection of oral histories *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights 1945-1990 (1992)*. His text is introduced by the editors of *Rereading America (2007)*, with:

Is religious belief a preference? How about sexual orientation? There may be nothing more basic to personal identity than religious belief and sexuality, yet both seem beyond the scope of individual choice. The pain that results when these two imperatives come into conflict is the topic of this selection. “The Bridge Builder” tells the story of Kathleen Boatwright, devout Christian, mother of four, and lesbian activist, who struggles to reconcile her religious beliefs and values with the reality of her identity as a woman. (676)

While one may argue that religion is a choice, that people can convert (and make other choices about religion), this personal story is the type of topic that students bring to the classroom, or that may enter the classroom from the media. In this case it can enter the classroom via the textbook as a “Cultural Context for Critical Thinking and Writing.” It enters the textbook as having first appeared in the American media via the production of oral histories. The questions following the text direct students to Internet web sites that engage readers with homosexuality and religious issues when those issues intersect (686). Students need a background or working knowledge of religion, in this case, Christianity, to write about this oral history.

In some cases, editors have demonstrated that they are persuaded into adding and deleting chapters from forthcoming editions of textbooks according to the news of the day. In the aftermath of 9-11 in America, some textbook editors were concerned about addressing religion, especially the Islamic faith. Bloom allows that she herself was motivated to include such essays in her article “Writing Textbooks in/for Times of Trauma” published with a collection of scholarly essays in *Trauma and the Teaching of Writing*. Following the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York City, Bloom was in the midst of editing the seventh edition of the textbook *The Essay Connection* (“Writing Textbooks” 129). She quotes Holocaust writer Elie Wiesel in stating “Not to transmit an experience is to betray it.” (She does not cite the text source for the quote.) Bloom notes that Wiesel relates, in his article “Why I Write,” that he does so in order “to help the dead vanquish death.” Bloom responds: “I could ask my students to do no less—not because of morbid reasons, or a sentimental desire to memorialize a past that will never come again, but as an ethical response to a world they did not ask for, but will nevertheless have to live in” (Ibid.).

Richard Marback, author of “Remediating National Tragedy and the Purposes for Teaching Writing,” also published in *Trauma and the Teaching of Writing*, along with Bloom, agrees that university writing instructors should address 9-11. He states: “The simultaneous dominance and indeterminacy of September 11 in our conceptual horizon should lead compositionists to take a hard evaluative look at the purposes of teaching writing” (53). [...] what we do when we teach writing is

direct the attention of students to the audiences, contexts, and purposes of their making of meaning here and now” (54). Marback was teaching writing when the attacks of 9-11-2001 in New York, Washington, and rural Pennsylvania, occurred. He wanted to maintain the objectives of the course while allowing students to make sense of the events happening around them. He describes his situation: “My solution to the dilemma of continuing work that should still matter, while acknowledging events pressing in on our attention, almost to the exclusion of all else, was to use media coverage of September 11 as an object lesson in the rhetoric of public ideas” (56). Marback declares that shifts in public affairs can enter the classroom through the media. Editor of *Trauma and the Teaching of Writing* Shane Borrowman states: “It simply never occurred to me that education was somehow separate from the ‘real world,’ for trauma has always been a part of teaching and learning” (182). He adds, “As teachers, we teach through our own traumas, the individual traumas of our students, and the shared traumas of the nation” (Ibid.). Borrowman also published the essay “Are You Now, or Have You Ever Been, an Academic?” in his book, with co-writer Edward M. White, that explores university campus issues in times of war or terrorism, including the Vietnam War. The authors conclude the article with:

The attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, have launched us into a state of war with terrorism that appears to have no end. U.S. troops continue to die in liberated Iraq and Afghanistan, and tensions continue to grow between the United States and both its traditional enemies and allies. (198)

The authors assert that “Instead of an enemy that may be defeated on the field, there is the prospect of a continual state of war, both within and outside America’s borders. And there is every reason to believe that the future will be punctuated from time to time with serious acts of violence” (Ibid.). Indeed, there continues to be misunderstandings and fear concerning terrorism and religion, especially concerning the Islamic faith and ethnicity in the United States.

While both Marback and Bloom agreed on the relevance of teaching about 9-11, Bloom expressed qualms about teaching that would involve the Islamic faith, a field and culture largely outside of her own knowledge. She explains that a “cushion of forty years’ professional experience” did not prepare her for teaching about Islam. Bloom states: “Although my research is creative nonfiction, essays, and American autobiography [that] includes works by many ethnic groups from a range of cultural backgrounds, little of it is Islamic” (Ibid.). Despite her hesitation to include Islamic issues in *The Essay Connection* textbook, Bloom insists that the issues would be addressed by students and the world outside of the classroom and would likely enter the classroom. She writes: “I realized that in a changed world, a collection of readings intended to stimulate students’ reasoned discussion and critical thinking and writing had to respond to this cataclysmic event” (Ibid.) that occurred in the United States. Bloom notes that she had a year during the textbook revision process to await commentary “grounded in profound knowledge of Middle Eastern history, Islamic culture and religion, and international politics” (Ibid.). These articles she expected

would appear in the media, and later, in her textbook, a first-year composition reader (131). For her textbooks, that include essays from current events, Bloom states she usually draws from magazines including *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *The New Yorker* (132) as well as from chapters of the most recent books published possible (133). The editor adds that she waited until the last minute (132) to select the articles (to send to publisher Houghton Mifflin) related to 9-11 in order to avoid the “knee-jerk reactions, written in the white-heat of personal assault and national injury” (129). She adds: “Never have I edited a book subject to such major revision right up to the publication date, but a new world requires adaptation” (133). Bloom’s textbook directs students to the further study of articles in the media, especially to the Internet. In the conclusion of the textbook she writes that the discussion is inconclusive, ongoing:

Each of the readers embedded in this topic ‘is complicated, for matters of war and peace are never simple, never static, particularly when negotiated in an international arena. [...] In discussing any topics related to the subject you will need to consult additional, current sources, for you will be aiming to write papers informed by accurate information, terms clearly defined, that avoid blanket generalizations and simplistic conclusions. (138-139).

As a result, of the selections she choose from the fallout of 9-11-2-2001, Bloom’s 2003 seventh edition of *The Essay Connection* included the chapter “Controversy in Context: Implications of World Terrorism and World Peace.”

Among criteria for the selections in that chapter Bloom states that, for each selection:

It had to be self-contained, with sufficient information and background material to be understood by American teachers and



students who, I assumed, would not be experts on the subject any more than I was. The fact that I was approaching the subject in a relative innocence would enable me to see it as new students might, and serve as a reminder to address their concerns: what would they need to know and when would they need to know it? (131)

Bloom's consideration of the lack of background information on religion serves well for students and teachers who are likely deficient in such knowledge of world religions. Essays and articles, however, don't always include sufficient background knowledge within the texts themselves. Bloom's textbooks are not included in the ones in this project. The textbooks analyzed here often do not contain background information on the religions that are addressed.

### 3.3 Scholars call for religious literacy in the university classroom

Some scholars, like Brooks, call for more of an education in world religions for Americans. This is because, as McKibben claims, Americans are illiterate when it comes to religion. McKibben precisely advocates a working knowledge of Christianity for American students and citizens. He states: "Only 40 percent of Americans can name more than four of the Ten Commandments, and a scant half can cite any of the four authors of the Gospels. Twelve percent believe Joan of Arc was Noah's wife" ("The Christian Paradox" 665). In addition to citing a lack of biblical background or knowledge of the Christian religion, McKibben states that more disconcerting is that:

Three quarters of Americans believe the Bible teaches that "God helps those who help themselves." That is, three out of four Americans believe that this uber-American idea, a notion at the core of our individualistic politics and culture, which was in fact uttered by

Ben Franklin, actually appears in Holy Scripture. Few ideas could be further from the gospel message, with its radical summons to love of neighbor. On this essential matter, most Americans—most American Christians—are simply wrong, as if 75 percent of American scientists believed that Newton proved gravity causes apples to fly up. (“Ibid.).

While McKibben affirms Christianity in his statement that biblical scripture is holy, he does make a point that much information in the public discourse about religion doesn’t necessarily concern direct sources. And then there is also the problem that interpretations of direct sources are not universal. Interpretations vary amongst the same discourse communities.

Stephen Prothero, author of *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn’t* (which was published in 2007, the same year as McKibben’s essay), would agree that those who profess to be religious are not always knowledgeable about doctrine and perceived sacred texts. Prothero describes the paradox that “Americans are both deeply religious and profoundly ignorant about religion. There are Protestants who can’t name the four gospels, Catholics who can’t name the seven sacraments, and Jews who can’t name the five books of Moses” (1). This is unfortunate because religion is rife in the public arena, often entangled with various issues of the day. Prothero quotes Boston University law professor Jay Wexler in stating that the public square is “clothed with Religion” (*Religious Literacy* 7). Prothero cites Wexler that ninety percent of the members of Congress reportedly “consult their religious beliefs when voting on legislation” (6). In addition, Wexler states that: “A majority of Americans believe that religious

organizations should publicly express their views on political issues, and an even stronger majority believe that it is important for a president to have strong religious beliefs” (6-7). Indeed, in 2012, politics and religion were just as enmeshed, if not more so than in 2007 as identifying faith has become an expectation of candidates but does not always clear up matters about a candidate’s faith. In fact, Writing for CNN (Cable News Network), Prothero points to a Pew Forum Poll released July 26, 2012 that indicates forty percent of Americans couldn’t name former presidential candidate Mitt Romney’s religion (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints), and Prothero indicates that seventeen percent of those polled in the same 2012 survey believed President Barack Obama was Muslim even though he has publically self-identified as Christian (Pew Forum).

Prothero avows that religious literacy among Americans has been an ongoing problem. He points to part of the dilemma of engaging in Christian rhetoric in the public square as a result of many Americans not knowing how to interpret the arguments being waged. He describes the paradox of Americans who consider themselves religious, yet do not demonstrate basic knowledge of sacred texts and doctrine (*Religious Literacy* 1). Prothero laments a trend in the general American populace of a “faith without understanding” (Ibid.) that he traces to the early twenty-first century with John Dewey’s encouraging schools to eschew the “piling up of information” (3), or content memorization in favor of teaching skills-based strategies.

Prothero applauds E.D. Hirsch's 1987 book *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* that calls for a return to learning basic historical knowledge in America's schools. Prothero suggests schools could draw from Hirsch's "appendix of five thousand or so names, dates, concepts, and phrases essential in his view to cultural literacy" (Ibid.) Initially considering demanding rote memorization of facts from his students as unproductive, Prothero discovered that conducting challenging conversations in the classroom didn't occur when students lacked basic information concerning history, culture, and issues of relevance in the United States. Specifically, in teaching world religions, he discovered a need for students to have a shared vocabulary and shared meanings of religious terms. He explains that: "In this way I became, like Hirsch, a traditionalist about content, not because I had come to see facts as the end of education but because I had come to see them as a necessary means to understanding" (*Cultural Literacy* 4). Hirsch asserts that gaining a knowledge base is essential to education. He states: "Only by piling up specific, communally shared information can children learn to participate in complex cooperative activities with other members of their community" (*Cultural Literacy* xv.). Hirsch adds that he views education from an anthropological lens in "that all human communities are founded upon specific shared information" (Ibid.). Unfortunately, especially in an age of endless information, community ideology may not always be empirically-based. Thus, there is a need to educate the public on religion. How to go about that in the public forum is beyond the scope of this project.

How to address it in the secular university is the challenge, especially when issues enmeshed with religion spill into the classroom from current events or articles on religion in textbooks.

With religion in the public sphere it is difficult to avoid it in the composition classroom, an environment that often asks students to grapple with the relevant issues of the day. Kristine Hansen claims that the composition classroom has a long tradition of engaging with current events in “Religious Freedom in the Public Square and the Composition Classroom.” She states: “Today’s teachers—whether they acknowledge it or not—constitute part of the 2,500-year rhetorical tradition that, during most of its long history, prepared young people to participate in public life,” (“Religious Freedom” 24). Hansen paraphrases Robert Connors, author of *Composition Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy*, in noting that this tradition “metamorphosed during the nineteenth century into the composition course, where one of its remnants is the argumentative essay, usually about some controversial aspect of public life” (Ibid.). Hansen asks: “How can we teach students with strong religious convictions to write about controversial public issues so that they can learn and practice the rhetorical arts that will prepare them for citizenship in a pluralist society? And how can we do this without making them feel they must deny or trivialize their religious beliefs?” (“Religious Freedom” 25). These are difficult questions, especially when students with strong religious convictions will note that text authors with similar convictions have already enmeshed concepts of

the divine with the political—and other issues of the day—in textbooks and in public discourse.

Hansen asks these questions concerning engaging with students with strong religious convictions based upon her experience. When she wrote her article, she lived in Utah; a state she describes as dominated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS). She describes herself as “an active, devout member” of the LDS. With the large LDS Church population, Hansen claims “Every day, letters to the editor of the two statewide newspapers are filled with arguments connecting political views to religious teachings” (“Religious Freedom 27). However, one need not live in Utah to find issues of the day intertwined with religious connotations, especially in letters to the editor (or opinion pieces) of national, state, and even university campus newspapers.

Hansen is not alone in pondering the impact of the media on the writing classroom. Prompted by student interest in citing religion in secular composition classroom arguments, as well as addressing the intersections of religion and public life, some composition scholars who teach in secular writing classrooms met in the July 2005 Wingspread Conference of the Society for Values in Higher Education with a thrust toward finding a way to negotiate religious and academic ideologies (Diamond 20). The conference participants developed the “Wingspread Declaration on Religion and Public Life Engaging Higher Education” that includes the statement: “The academy must preserve and enlarge its understanding of public reason by

setting standards for inquiry and discourse” (23). The declaration also states:

Higher education must preserve the essential principles of intellectual integrity and academic freedom in the face of pressures of ideological interference, whether religious or secular, from across the political spectrum. (Diamond 24)

This statement stressing that understanding religion and engaging with it in order to preserve academic freedom is similar to Elizabeth Vander Lei’s assertion “that by acknowledging the presence of religious faith in our classrooms—maybe even inviting it in—we can do a better job of helping students recognize and respond to inappropriate rhetorical uses of religious faith in both academic and civic discourse” (“Coming to Terms” 3). Not addressing the enmeshment of religion and politics in the public square promotes a danger of complicity and allows misguided notions to prevail such as those of President Barack Obama being a practicing Muslim.

#### 3.4 Why religion is being addressed

Not addressing the enmeshment of politics in the public square also promotes dissension. Crowley states “Inability or unwillingness to disagree openly can pose a problem for the maintenance of democracy” (*Toward a Civil Discourse* 1). She also states that maintaining a democracy “requires at minimum a discursive climate in which dissenting positions can be heard” (2). Crowley speaks of the United States as being torn between founding principles of liberalism and fundamental Christians who “aim to ‘restore’ biblical values to the center of American life and politics” (3). These “biblical” values are interpreted through a viewpoint that challenges

individual rights “on issues of current public concern: abortion rights, prayer in school, same-sex unions, and censorship, as well as more explicitly political practices such as the appointment of judges, and the conduct of foreign policy” (Ibid.). It is easy to see the blurring of public concern and religion in these particular cases. It is also evident that issues of public concern in the United States are often viewed through a religious lens.

While some scholars suggest religious issues are private and therefore uncomfortable to discuss, Crowley states that Christians who believe in an impending apocalypse reinterpreted ancient biblical prophecy in the 1980s in a way “that modified the apocalyptic narrative in order to suggest that political involvement was necessary in order to hasten the advent of the end time” (8). Crowley defines the term “apocalypticism” as one that “signifies belief in a literal Second Coming of Jesus Christ, an event that is to be accompanied by the ascent of those who are saved into heaven” (7). She adds: “Apocalyptists believe that this ascent, called the ‘Rapture,’ will occur either prior to or during the tribulation, a period of worldwide devastation and suffering. Finally, at the last judgment, evil will be overcome and unbelievers will be condemned to eternal punishment” (Ibid.). Thus some students, who embrace the apocalyptic perspective, might perceive that it is their “Christian duty” to engage religion with political issues (9). Whether students perceive a religious duty (Christian, apocalyptic, evangelical, or otherwise) to engage with the political realm or not, religion and politics too often intersect in the papers that students



propose to write. This is largely a problem when students connect various issues to quotes from sacred texts and view the quotes as divine and therefore, absolutist.

Crowley claims that Christian fundamentalists insist in applying biblical values to American politics (*Toward a Civil Discourse* 3). If this occurs, Crowley asserts “Americans will conduct themselves, publicly and privately, according to a set of beliefs derived from a fundamentalist reading of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition” (Ibid.). It is important to note that such beliefs are derived from a particular interpretation of biblical directives as many people don’t go to the Bible as a source to read it for themselves but rather accept the interpretations from religious leaders. There may be some students who “quote” the Bible without having read it.

One example of applying un-informed religious notions to the public sphere is addressed by Prothero. He speaks of dire consequences of the ignorance of the public square in relating the killing of Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh at an Arizona gas station. This occurred in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 when a vigilante saw Sodhi wearing a turban and targeted him as a Muslim and perceived him as a terrorist (*Religious Literacy* 3). Prothero states that it is more than religious intolerance that killed Sodhi. He alleges that it is also a lack of education “because the world’s religions, no longer quarantined in the nations of their birth, now live and move among us: yoga in our church halls, *nirvana* in our dictionaries, and Sikhs at our gas stations” (Ibid.). In order to be an informed citizen, it is apparent that education on religion is needed. A religious studies professor, Prothero studies how

religion works in society. “Rather than ruminating on God, practitioners of religious studies explore how other human beings (theologians included) ruminate on sacred things,” he states. While he is in favor of teaching about religion at the secondary and higher education levels, his main argument is that knowledge of religion is a cultural element necessary to effective citizenry (*Religious Literacy* 11). He explains:

Today, when religion is implicated in virtually every issue of national and international import (not the least the nomination of Supreme Court justices) US citizens need to know something about religion too. In an era in which the public square is rightly or wrongly, awash in religious reasons, can one really participate fully in public life without knowing something about Christianity and the world’s religions? (*Religious Literacy* 12)

Prothero suggests many Americans are uninformed about Islam and therefore “are too easily swayed by demagogues on the left or the right” (*Religious* 13). Rather than reading the Qur’an or its interpretations, Americans are influenced by often polarizing viewpoints of it from public discourse.

### 3.5 The classroom as public sphere

The classroom itself is also somewhat of a public sphere. Bérubé refers to his literature classroom as a “quasi-public, quasi-private space” (*What’s Liberal* 12) whereby what is discussed in the classroom can be taken out into the public, especially with instances of student organizations intending “to allow conservative students to report on the doings of and teachings of liberal professors—or, more accurately, professors who offend conservatives’ political sensibilities in one way or another” (20). Of course not just political, sensibilities also apply to this concern, but

religious sensibilities as well. In addition, students can take offense to others who don't have the same perceptions on such issues as global warming, or homosexual civil unions. The public sphere not only is taken out of the classroom, it arrives into the classroom via students and textbooks. Bérubé said that he wrote his book because of outside interest into the classroom, through the conservative organizations attacking the liberal arts. He states that his book addressed this “[...] for I feel that I am working under special circumstances, at a time when both my institutions and my faith in reasoned debate are challenged in unprecedented ways” (20).

While Bérubé addresses an attack on the liberal arts, Crowley addresses the attack on liberalism that she states is “the default discourse of American politics” due to the United States’ founding documents and “its system of jurisprudence saturated with liberal values” (*Toward a Civil Discourse* 3). She defines liberal values as including “individual rights, equality before the law, and personal freedom” (Ibid.). Crowley also adds “freedom, tolerance, privacy, reason, and the rule of law” to this definition (*Toward a Civil Discourse* 5). Her focus is that liberalism is in conflict with the Christian apocalyptic viewpoint. She explains that the two conflicting and dominating discourses in the public sphere are “liberalism and Christian fundamentalism” (*Toward a Civil Discourse* 2). This is a polarizing problem, according to Crowley, because: [...] the tactics typically used in liberal argument—empirically based reason and factual evidence—are not highly valued by Christian apocalyptists, who rely instead on revelation, faith, and biblical interpretation to

ground claims” (*Toward a Civil Discourse* 3). However, it is not just apocalyptists, but Christians—and students of other religions—who also rely on revelation, faith and interpretation of perceived sacred texts in order to ground claims. It has become even more difficult to avoid students’ use of religious “truths” from scholarly articles that speak of faith as more and more scholars “come out in faith” in academic journals and books. (This issue is explored more in Chapter Two). Some scholarly journals professing faith can be found in academic databases and university libraries.

Due to the enmeshment of various cultural issues and religion, Prothero contends that “The argument is that you need religious literacy in order to be an effective citizen (*Religious Literacy* 11). He further states “Religious illiteracy makes it difficult for Americans to make sense of a world in which people kill and make peace in the name of Christ or Allah” (*Religious Literacy* 11-12). In 2007, Prothero feared that one result of religious illiteracy was that people were abdicating power from the people to the press and “talking heads” (*Religious Literacy* 13).

### 3.6 Negotiating with religion

So how do instructors negotiate with the issue of religion as it is entangled with various topics in the news, and the current events texts in the textbooks? Prothero and Bérubé advocate educating students and the public on religious issues, and in promoting literacy of world religions. Prothero and Malinowitz also suggest separating religion from other issues as a starting point. For example, many Christians see the concept of “family values” as ingrained in Christianity. Prothero

questions why this is so. He asks, without basic knowledge of the New Testament of the Bible, “How to determine whether the effort to yoke Christianity and ‘family values’ makes sense without knowing what sort of ‘family man’ Jesus was?” (*Religious Literacy* 12-13). Prothero would insist that people who equate Christianity with biblical values then find the sources from the Bible in order to support their claims. Of course, what constitutes “family values” would also need to be defined. Crowley claims that values are often narrowly defined and that such terms can be described more broadly. For example, in the case of “family values,” “they can be rewritten. Family, for example, can be reconstructed to include groups of committed relatives or friends who share a home” (*Toward a Civil Discourse* 200) in order to fruitfully engage in “argumentative exchange” (ibid).

Malinowitz, not writing on religion per se, does write on the entanglement of issues in the public arena. She calls for a need for critical literacy among Americans in “The Uses of Literacy in a Globalized, Post-September 11 World.” She cites media critic Laura Flanders for pointing out what Malinowitz describes as “semantic ideological chains” of words getting entangled together in chains of meaning such as: “The United States=‘America’,” “America=“The Civilized World,” or an “attack on the World Trade Towers or the Pentagon=an attack on the American way of life” (“Uses of Literacy” 247). In this type of semantic entangling family values=Christian. To engage in issues that intersect, students could first disentangle the issues and define them independently. For example, there is a need to define

“family values” and how they could differ from one religion or culture to another. This would disentangle the terms “family values” from any single one religion. It could also be noted that people can have certain values within a family without professing a religion of any kind.

Malinowitz also advocates public discussion of the contested issues. She states:

After September 11, 2001, many people said that Americans had lost their innocence due to finally experiencing destruction on their own soil. I think, on the contrary, that losing our innocence is precisely what we still need most to do. It is especially hard to do this in a climate in which asking questions, reading skeptically, and analyzing closely—three essential components of intellectual work—can lead to charges of anti-Americanism or justifying terrorism. (“Uses of Literacy” 249).

Likewise, instructors who question religion can be perceived as anti-religion. Malinowitz suggests that twenty-first century composition instructors can “creatively seize the ‘critical moment’ ” (Ibid.) in breaking up semantic ideological chains. She states “we are among the very few people available to let students know that critical thinking is *not* a sin or a crime and that they do have the power and the resources to describe this world thickly through reading and writing” (“Uses of Literacy” 250 *emphasis hers*).

### 3.7 Religion, treading lightly due to the United States Constitution

Many professors find religion a loaded topic due to issues of separation of church and state. Prothero brings up the United States Constitution and religion in the classroom noting that distinctions were made between studying the Bible as

literature (academically) or reading it devotionally which is unconstitutional (*Religious Literacy* 161). Prothero states that teachers in public schools often teach around religion by avoiding the subject. He posits: “Silence can lie as well as words, of course, and in this case the lie is that religion doesn’t matter: it has no social, political, or historical force so students can get along just fine without knowing anything about it” (Ibid.) and that avoidance can “indoctrinate” students into a secular worldview. He also insists “At least one course in religious studies should also be required of all college graduates” (*Religious Literacy* 173). He decries the lack of knowledge of world religions amongst American graduates:

Every year colleges provide bachelor’s degrees to students who cannot name the first book of the Bible, who think that Jesus parted the Red Sea and Moses agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane, who know nothing about what Islam teaches about war and peace, and who cannot name one salient difference between Hinduism and Buddhism. (*Religious Literacy* 173-174).

Prothero, allows that—in teaching world religions—that the distinction between study and worship, or rather teaching and preaching, be maintained but that the risks outweigh the consequences of not teaching future leaders “minimal religious literacy” (175).

But what of the United States Constitution? Hansen states in “Religious Freedom in the Public Square and in the Composition Classroom,” that “First, the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution allows freedom of expression, and that freedom does not end when students enter the classroom” (27). Of course teachers draw limits to hate speech and other expressions that Hansen does not address. She

does explain that courts have upheld some religious expression in classrooms, and that the First Amendment and the “wall of separation between church and state” “does not mean that religion must be banned from the public square; it means only that government cannot establish preferences among religions” (Ibid.). In referencing the First Amendment, Hansen claims that: “Furthermore, it means that government cannot prefer non-religion to religion” (ibid). She cites the 1952 opinion of Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas which states “no clause in the U.S. Constitution requires that ‘government show a callous indifference to religious groups. That would be preferring those who believe in no religion over those who do believe,’” Hansen adds, paraphrasing Terry Eastland’s *Religious Liberty in the Supreme Court: The Cases That Define the Debate over Church and State* (107-108).

Prothero would caution, however, “The United States is by law a secular country. God is not mentioned in the Constitution, and the First Amendment’s establishment clause forbids the state from getting into the church business” (*Religious Literacy* 28-29). He addresses confusion in the Constitution created by the First Amendment, noting that it:

[...] prohibits the making of any law respecting an establishment of religion, impeding the free exercise of religion, abridging the freedom of speech, infringing on the freedom of the press, interfering with the right to peaceably assemble or prohibiting the petitioning for a governmental redress of grievances” (“Bill of Rights” National Archives).

Prothero claims the phrase “impeding the free exercise of religion” results in a “clause safeguarding religious liberty” (29). He further elaborates:



So, there is a logic not only to President John Adam's affirmation in the Treaty of Tripoli in 1796 that "the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion" but also to the Supreme Court's 1982 observation that "this is a Christian nation." In short, the longstanding debate about whether the United States is secular or religious is fundamentally confused. (Ibid.).

No wonder educators are confused with this ambiguity present. Prothero explains: "Ever since George Washington put his hand on a Bible and swore to uphold a godless Constitution, the United States has been both staunchly secular and resolutely religious [...] religion and politics were bedfellows from the start" (Ibid.). It is notable that religion—and just about any issue in the American public sphere—is enmeshed with other topics in the twenty-first century. Returning to the concept "separation of church and state," Prothero describes the history of Baptists as being "staunch advocates of the separation of church and state" (*Religious Literacy* 200) and thus, Thomas Jefferson is known for his 1802 letter to the Baptists located in Danbury, Connecticut, commending a "wall of separation between church and state." Later, Prothero points out, "Baptist Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black" grafted "the 'wall' metaphor onto the Constitution in *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947)" (Ibid.). There is no evident "wall" in the university composition classroom separating religion from any other issue that comes into the classroom. If there is a partition of any kind attempting to shield religion from current events issues, it would consist of the flimsiest of fragile onionskin liable to crackle and disintegrate at the first breaths of belief stated by students. Barbara A. Lea, in "Religion in the Classroom: Legal

Issues” states: “Public and college universities are bound by the U.S. Constitution, and the constitutions and laws of their states” in the discussing of, or in the prohibiting of the discussion of religion in the classroom (103). She notes that a government entity or an institution funded (even partially) by the government may not establish religion. In this case, the public educational institution “may not prefer one religion over another, and may not be related to any religious denomination” (Ibid.) Lea then addresses the “free exercise” clause as meaning that individuals are protected from government interference in certain religious activities on campus such as not interfering with student religious organizations, or students holding prayer meetings on campus if other student groups are allowed to use facilities for meetings.

Lea also mentioned problems with interfering with students who want to write on their religious beliefs (“Religion in the Classroom 105). She relates:

There have been several lawsuits in which students object to assignments or other course requirements because a topic is offensive to their religious beliefs or they are not allowed to address the topic from the perspective of their religious beliefs. These cases have occurred in public universities, and the courts have generally upheld the institution’s right to control the curriculum as long as it does not discriminate on religious grounds against students who raise objections to assignments or classroom discussion. (Ibid.).

But what do you do when students state not allowing them to model readers in textbooks by making religious connections violates their beliefs? I received a paper proposal in a Spring 2013 English 1302 course from a student who wanted to connect Martin Luther King Jr.’s civil rights rhetoric concerning equality among

raises in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail” with a presumed connection to advocating against abortion. This student insisted that the topic should be addressed from her particular religious belief. The student asked to use biblically-based evidence since King often referenced the Bible in his speeches and written text. The launching text for the student was King’s “Letter” (211) published in the eighth edition of *World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers* (Jacobus), a required textbook for students enrolled in English 1302 at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin in Fall 2013 (a textbook from my study). The same textbook also contains “Thoughts from the Tao-te Ching” (21) and Iris Murdoch’s “Morality and Religion” (729). What do we say to students who want to mirror the textbook writings and quote biblical references as King does? I would note that King’s texts also emerged from the public sphere. The student later changed topics because I asserted that King’s quotes be used in the context that he was speaking and not used as assumptions of being an abortion opponent “in what he might believe as a Christian if he were alive today.” The student correctly insisted that King was a required text to read in the course and that the civil rights advocate used biblical references as if they were absolute truths. For example, King states, “and just as the Apostle Paul left his village in Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town” (*World of Ideas* 214). The student noted that King didn’t question the Bible stories and peppered his speech with phrases as “thus saith

the Lord” (Ibid.). Also, a question in *World of Ideas* (following King’s letter) directs students to read the Bible. It states:

Compare King’s letter with sections of Paul’s letters to the faithful in the New Testament. Either choose a single letter, such as the Epistle to the Romans, or select passages from Romans, the two letters to the Corinthians, the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Thessalonians, or the Philippians. How did Paul and King agree and disagree about brotherly love, the mission of Christ, the mission of the church, concern for the law, and the duties of the faithful? (*World of Ideas* 2010 230).

So, here students need to have a familiarity with the Bible and to read it directly in order to discuss King’s letter if this assignment question is used. Biblical literacy is necessary, or rather, engaging in the original source is essential. The particular student in my class that I previously mentioned (who wanted to write on anti-abortion perspectives and “Letter from Birmingham Jail”) stated that she was unfamiliar with the Bible, but hoped to produce a paper based on the assumptions of what she had heard in church, and in her religious discourse community. She would be better served in writing a paper with biblical connections (with various interpretations), but not one that put words into King’s mouth. With research into King’s writings, and the Bible, she might have found some connections. The student, however, was unwilling to conduct research.

With readings such as King’s there is also a concern that students can object to an assignment on religious or non-religious grounds. Lea explains that “There have been several lawsuits in which students object to assignments or other course requirements because the topic is offensive to their religious beliefs or they are not

allowed to address the topic from the perspective of their religious beliefs” (“Religion in the Classroom” 105). Lea adds that: “These cases have occurred in public universities, and the courts have generally upheld the institution’s right to control the curriculum as long as it does not discriminate on religious grounds against students who raise objections to assignments or classroom discussions” (Ibid.). Instructors are not discriminating against religious beliefs when asking for research of original religious sources.

Another interesting occurrence in composition courses is that some students select books for research papers written by theologians or professors at divinity schools. The standard syllabi often states that scholarly books or scholarly journals are required to be used as sources for the researched position paper. “Scholarly” isn’t usually defined in a syllabus so it doesn’t preclude journal articles or books embracing faith that are written by Ph.D. holders at religious affiliated institutions. Hence, “scholarly” should be defined if it is to include or exclude religion as some materials found in university online journal databases and libraries include faith-based perceptions in sources. Lea asserts that if religion is to be included in assignments then it should be stated in the syllabus, and (in addition) alternate assignments should be available for students who would not want to write about religion. I would suggest if religious scholarly work is not acceptable, that be stated also. Lea also suggests that some students may be allowed to be exempt from

assignments. She gives as an example exempting “an Orthodox Jewish student from eating forbidden foods in a cooking class” (“Religion in the Classroom” 103).

Exemptions, however, aren’t always needed. Lea pointed out that a book that was required to be read by all freshman students at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the summer of 2002 was *Approaching the Qur’an: The Early Revelations* by Michael Sills. At the time of publication (2007), Sills is listed as a professor of Islamic History and Literature in the Divinity School at the University of Chicago (*Approaching the Qur’an* back matter). He has published books on various world religions. Several anonymous students and a group of taxpayers sued the university claiming their rights were violated under the Free Exercise Clause of the U.S. Constitution (“Religion in the Classroom” (107). The university prevailed in keeping the book for the freshman seminar (108), and insisted that the book’s selection was for purposes “entirely secular, academic, and pedagogical” (ibid). So, no constitutional violation was found in this particular case. Lea quotes from D. Euben’s “Curriculum Matters” (86) who notes that a faculty member who submitted an affidavit in defense of the university states: “Would next year’s committee be forbidden to require incoming students to read *The Iliad*, on the grounds that it could encourage worship of strange, disgraceful gods and encourage pillage and rape?” So, in this case, even though the text itself addressed religion, it is how it is handled in discussion and assignments that legitimizes the usage of the work itself.

Books such as *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations* can be incorporated into the classroom. It's *how* they are studied that is the challenge. This caution can be applied to sacred texts. Lea's summation states, in part: "In both private and public colleges and universities, faculty and students have the right to discuss matters of religion in class when religion is relevant to the course" ("Religion in the Classroom" 114). This is what some courtroom litigation has indicated. However, there are limits to classroom engagement with religion. Lea states: [...] "academic freedom has boundaries and does not protect faculty who inject religious topics or religious beliefs and opinions into courses in which religion is not a relevant topic" (Ibid.). It might be safest to not inject religious beliefs and opinions at all in the secular composition classroom, and this notion would extend that caution outside the classroom to office hours, or even announcing one's faith or beliefs in scholarly works as it acts as an element of persuasion to students. Instructors that announce their faith affiliations in their scholarship is something that is addressed in greater detail in Chapter Two. Finally, Lea suggests: "Respecting the perspectives and beliefs of one's students, and insisting that fellow students follow that example, should help prevent disputes over religious and moral differences in college classrooms from being played out before a judge" ("Religion in the Classroom" 114-115). This is the type of challenge that makes avoidance of religion altogether as more attractive than negotiating the boundaries of the Constitution. However, it's possible that this challenge can apply to various topics such as gender issues or

abortion, issues that are often enmeshed with religion. Even when these controversial and polarizing topics are not enmeshed with religion, they are such intense identity markers that they could result in student lawsuits.

### 3.8 Conclusion

Religious beliefs often saturate other topics in the public square. It is difficult to prevent discussion of world religions when they continue to haunt civic life, such as instances of terroristic acts worldwide. In addition these issues of the public arena are already intersected with religion in textbooks, especially when textbooks adopt essays and articles that first appear in the American media. The most well-known and often reprinted text that entered the public consciousness from the media is Martin Luther King's "Letter From Birmingham Jail," a major example of the intersections of religion and civil rights issues that was first published in a newspaper. Also reprinted heavily, according to Bloom's database is King's "I Have a Dream" speech that first was heard as a public speech Aug. 28, 1963. The speech was printed and reprinted sixty-eight times in the collection of the database chronicling a fifty-year time span (1946-1996) of anthologies in university composition textbooks ("The Essay Canon" 426). King's speech appears seven times in the fifty-nine textbooks in this project as "Letter From Birmingham Jail" appears to have taken over in popularity over the speech in recent years. And these examples are just a sampling of thousands of textbooks produced over the years. With religion already intersected with other issues of American culture it is important for students



to have a working knowledge of world religions, especially for students who want to include religion in their research papers. One way this can be addressed is to view religion as a literacy, a community of discourse that can be intersected with an academic discourse of inquiry, which is explored in Chapter Four.

## Chapter 4

### Negotiating Religion in the Secular Writing Classroom

#### 4.1 Introduction

In the nation's top sixteen university composition textbooks, selected by publishers as being in most popular usage from 1990 to 2012, there are hundreds of images and texts that reference religion. These texts and images with a focus on religion are contained in composition textbooks intended for the secular university writing classroom. Religion, and issues of faith and the divine, can come through the door of the classroom from the academy in the form of these textbooks. Now that religion is here, what can instructors do to negotiate it? In order to grapple with the rhetoric of religion in composition textbooks, one valuable strategy is Shannon Carter's method of viewing religion as a literacy or discourse community. This method best engages inquiry rather than viewing religious ideas that are often considered universally true in all situations. Using the New Literacy discourse theory as presented by Carter and Russell T. McCutcheon's four-part model of "defining," "describing," "comparing" and "redescribing" religion (*Critics, Not Caretaking* 218), the topic of religion may be approached as a literacy, a discourse, or as a code of cultural and linguistic practices of a community. These discourses can be then analyzed through McCutcheon's strategies. Carter draws her method of perceiving religion as a discourse from the field of New Literacy Studies (NLS). She states:

The NLS redefines literacy education as a matter of reading and negotiating various contextualized forces that are deeply embedded in

identity formation, political affiliations, material and social conditions, and ideological frameworks. In doing so, it necessarily flattens hierarchies among literacies—where one literacy is inherently more significant or valuable than another—as the value of one literacy over another can only be determined by its appropriateness to context. (*The Way Literacy Lives* 17)

Employing NLS methods does not privilege one discourse over another, except in its appropriateness to context or the situation in which the discourse is being examined. So there are communities whereby religious literacies announcing faith or engaging in prayers are appropriate; for example, in a church setting or in other religious-affiliated events. Speaking of a student who professed her faith in a paper in the secular composition classroom, Chris Anderson writes that: “as instructors we need to understand that academic language isn’t the only language” (“Description of an Embarrassment” 22). In “The Description of Embarrassment: When Students Write About Religion,” Anderson describes languages as codes. He uses the pseudonym “Cathy” for a student who professes her Christian faith in a paper and he relates that “Cathy’s rhetoric *is* appropriate in other settings, as testimonial during a church meeting, in prayer discussions, and so on.” (Ibid. *emphasis his*). He alleges religious language is “a kind of code, produced by and proper in certain situations; her [Cathy’s] problem is that she applied this code to the wrong situation, not that she’s used a wrong code” (Ibid.). Anderson claims that students’ various codes or discourses should be valued, and that instructors should especially acknowledge the difficulty in attempting to explain faith, a concept based on the inexplicable. He states: “And if the pressure of wordlessness were not enough,

the Christian rhetorician must operate in the midst of two thousand years of cliché, so that at the mere mention of *Christian* catchphrases, doors slam shut all over the place” (Ibid. *emphasis his*). He suggests instructors tell students that they appreciate the difficulty of employing religious codes. Nonetheless, professing faith, praying, or practicing religion, doesn’t succeed to meet academic requirements as a code of inquiry and can cross boundaries into church and state issues, as is discussed largely in Chapter Three. Anderson recommends engaging students in thinking about conflicting audiences in order to “subvert Christian cliché, attack easy armchair Christianity” (“Description of an Embarrassment” 24). This can be accomplished when students write for an audience that may not agree with their community of religious discourse.

In an academic setting, defining and describing one literacy to an audience of another literacy requires inquiry into one’s literacy of “expertise.” “Expertise” is qualified because, when it comes to religion—as demonstrated by several scholars in Chapter Three—students aren’t always familiar with primary sources or their doctrines. As Mark Montesano writes, lack of a working knowledge of religion cannot be remedied in the matter of fifteen or sixteen weeks of a course (“Religious Faith” 87). Montesano, who taught both in the English, and the Religious Studies Departments at Arizona State University, claims that the desire to write on religion is not enough for students who haven’t studied the primary texts of their faith affiliations (*Negotiating Religious Faith* 185). In discussing one student, Montesano

commented: “Her lack of intellectual background for her religious faith was a handicap. How does one make up for that deficiency in a semester of English?” (“Religious Faith” 87). In his essay “Religious Faith, Learning, and Writing: Challenges in the Classroom,” co-written with Duane Roen and published in the book *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom*, Montesano agrees with Carter that there are different discourses that students must engage with in the secular composition classroom. Although he doesn’t mention Carter, Montesano asserts:

In academic settings, students need to learn to ground their truth claims in bodies of knowledge that may be shared across belief systems. Students need to come into contact with knowledge that is constructed broadly, rather than narrowly, across religious and secular boundaries, if they are to articulate their beliefs clearly, intelligently, and persuasively. By doing so, their beliefs become open to discussion. 85)

This suggests that students can do well in describing their arguments across the borders of discourse communities in order to negotiate contested topics.

Another recommendation, by McCutcheon, is to re-describe religious beliefs with strategies of an academic discourse that will open ideas to discussion. This is significant to the argument paper whereby students often need to entertain conflicting perspectives. Montesano adds: “If we do not provide opportunities for students to actively engage their belief systems in writing classrooms—then we implicitly tell students that religions should not be subjected to critical analysis” (Ibid.). He allows that instructors can provide a “forum for the expression of

religious belief in a pluralistic, rhetorical culture” (Ibid.). This is an environment that can be developed in order to foster learning, a strategy that can legitimize religious discourse rather than avoiding the topic of religion altogether. But it is evident that students must have some education in the religions that they attempt to incorporate into an argument, or at least the willingness to research the primary sources of their faith affiliations. This can translate into extra research for the first-year student who must also be open to entertaining conflicting opinions about the topics that they select. In the words of Montesano: “Members of each religion must willingly abdicate the goal of cultural domination” (Ibid.). More than a passion for religion and good writing, skills are required to write on religion that are often enmeshed with other topics of the day in the public sphere as is discussed in Chapter Three. Research and a willingness to engage in other perspectives are necessary in order to include the topic of religion, as well as many other conflicted topics.

#### 4.2 Religious literacy as a social practice

Carter views literacy as a social practice, not just as a set of skills (*The Way Literacy Lives* 2). She describes literacy as not just a language skill related to reading and writing, but instead as a term to be understood as “social rather than alphabetic” (“Living inside the Bible (Belt)” 578). Carter means that both knowledge and language skills are needed to acquire literacy of a given community of social practice drawn together by an activity system such as “chess, Star Trek, or composition studies” (*The Way Literacy Lives* 19). Thus literacy is defined as

having competency or knowledge in a specific area, with an understanding of speech and cultural codes in order to communicate within a cultural system. This dovetails with McCutcheon's notion of studying religion:

[...] *like all other aspects of human behavior*, those collections of beliefs, behaviors, and institutions we classify as "religion" can be conceptualized and then explained as thoroughly human activity, with no mysterious distillate left over. Should one assert that these activities we name "religion" are more than this [...] then one might better pursue such studies in a setting outside a public university (*Critics Not Caretakers* xi. *emphasis original*)

While some might view McCutcheon's notion of religion as an activity to be studied outside of the metaphysical realm as diminishing religion, he and Carter offer a way to validate the study of religion in an academic setting. This succeeds by legitimizing religion as a discourse and a literacy whereby students can write about the subject without having to prove that elements of the divine exist. Indeed, this is one way to engage with religious texts while maintaining boundaries of church and state that is addressed at length in Chapter Three. Here, students would be engaging in the study rather than in the practice of religion.

For this approach to be effective, students would first need to explore their knowledge of the issue of religion that they want to write about. This would involve defining the issue as well as terms of the issue. Burke relates: "Whether or not there is a realm of the 'supernatural,' there are *words* for it" (*Rhetoric of Religion* 7 *emphasis his*). Words are borrowed from the secular vocabulary and infused with supernatural meaning. Likewise, Burke claims that words from the supernatural

realm can be re-described with secular definitions. He gives as an example of the multiple meanings—both secular and supernatural for the word “grace.” He points out that the Latin root of the word “grace” had “purely secular meanings as: favor, esteem, friendship, partiality, service, obligation, thanks, recompense, purpose” (Ibid.). Later, the word took on connotations of a relationship “between ‘God’ and man.” Nonetheless, as Burke indicates, the word “grace” can have either secular or theological meanings.

Students would benefit in understanding and defining terms no matter the topic. For example, in the case of same-sex unions, students need to define whether they are writing about civil unions or church-sanctified marriage and then describe what the elements of same-sex unions entail. The writers always need to define terms and specific issues of topics in an argument paper. McCutcheon explains that definitions can perform as “theories in miniature” (*Critics Not Caretakers* 218). He suggests that students learn “that there is something at stake in the way in which we go about defining and classifying objects in the world as an important start” (*Critics Not Caretakers* 219).

#### 4.3 Negotiating with religious discourse

Carter offers the notion that students be given the tools of “rhetorical dexterity,” (579) an approach that “trains writers to effectively read, understand, manipulate, and negotiate the cultural and linguistic codes of a new community of practice (Lave and Wenger) based on a relatively accurate assessment of another,



more familiar one” (574). Students might thus begin with analyzing the familiar literacy of a religious discourse by decoding it, and then learn the codes of an academic discourse in order to re-describe their arguments. For example, a former student of mine was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig’s disease, a neurological disease also known as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). The student wanted to write on stem cell research and the stance of the Catholic Church as opposing the research that might lead to a cure for his disease. The student, who identified as a devout Catholic, was conflicted as he was in favor of stem cell research. He first wanted to write about what “God says about stem cell research.” After perusing the Bible (in his perspective the word of God written down) to no avail on his subject, his church leader directed him to documents drawn up by Popes and the student decided to focus on them in his argument instead. By the conclusion of his paper he had personally decided to continue to affiliate with his religion but to just disagree with the decision of the church’s authority as opponents of stem cell research. He was able to present the differing perspectives of scientists and theologians in a respectful manner, indicating points where he thought that arguments were valid and where they were not. First, he had to gain knowledge from sources, summarize their arguments, and then define his religious discourse. What he learned from fellow churchgoers, his family, and his local church was clarified and often altered through the findings of his research. He also engaged in studying stem cell research that involved negotiating with a different literacy, that of the medical discipline. Just

defining his terms in both literacies (medical and religious) required rhetorical dexterity. This student was mature in his ability to step back from viewpoints that he was passionate about enough to question perceived “truths” that he had “heard about” in his church but not researched through primary sources previous to taking the class.

Ringer might perceive this “step back” from viewing “absolute truths” as opening up sites of discursive-material interaction that could threaten a student’s religious identity (“Integrating Faith” 275). Ringer, assistant professor of English at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee at the time he authored “The Consequences of Integrating Faith into Academic Writing: Casuistic Stretching and Biblical Citation” allows that more than learning a ‘discursive act’ in order for students to tailor their words to an academic audience that doesn’t share one’s faith, students need to “construct hybrid subjectivities that value various aspects of their identities” (“Integrating Faith” 275). Students are not always able to step outside their beliefs even enough to consider trying on academic discourse, and as Ringer writes (of one evangelical student): “to face a key epistemological dilemma: does his evangelical Christian faith represent absolute truth, or is it one legitimate option among many” (“Integrating Faith” 273)? Ringer asserts that acknowledging different perspectives can open up avenues of doubt in one’s faith, especially with belief in absolute truths (274). He writes about a student (whom he calls “Austin”) as subordinating “one of

his core evangelical beliefs to the pluralistic view that perspectives other than Christianity are legitimate” (ibid).

Students who are asked to entertain pluralistic views may not want to write on religion. They may not want to open up avenues of doubt in their beliefs. Ringer asks “what are the identity consequences for evangelicals who integrate faith in their academic writing?” (273). He cautions that evangelical students who do make such rhetorical moves in entertaining other perspectives may be unaware of implications that “should concern writing theorists who seek to value their students’ identities and beliefs, religious or not” (Ibid.) However, beliefs can be questioned, on topics other than religion in a learning environment. Douglas Downs offers an example whereby students who identify with concepts of patriotism may identify with patriotism as an unquestionable attribute. Downs, the author of “True Believers, Real Scholars, and Real True Believing Scholars: Discourses of Inquiry and Affirmation in the Composition Classroom,” insists that “injunctions against doubt or insistence on the rightness of received wisdom are hardly limited to religious expression” (43). He explains: “Discourses, particularly jingoistic ones, are affirming: for those who interpret patriotism as unquestioning loyalty, the act of questioning undermines the values of the Discourse itself in a logically paralyzing contradiction” (Ibid.). So, it is not just the topic of religion that can result in student resistance to questioning one’s worldview. Downs also offers a unique perspective that some religions welcome questioning and inquiry through allowing that much of what concerns religion is

often decreed “unknowable” (Ibid.). Therefore, he explains “discourses of affirmation cannot be neatly equated with religion” (Ibid.). This is something for instructors to keep in mind. It is valuable to remind students that faith (by definition) doesn’t require proof or evidence—something needed in academia, and that much of what is stated in sacred texts can also be cited as unknowable to mankind. So, it can be suggested to students that it isn’t wrong to question the “unknowable.”

McCutcheon speaks of the ancient rhetorician, Socrates, and notes that “Socrates’ query nicely sums up what might be considered *the* issue at the heart of academic study of religion: is our object of analysis a preexistent essence we simply recognize, or is it instead the product of social practices and institutions?” (*Critics Not Caretakers* 219 *emphasis his*). McCutcheon references Euthyphro’s attempt to define “piety” for Socrates. McCutcheon explains that Euthyphro defined piety as “that which all the gods love” (Ibid.) and adds that “Socrates poses a question in reply: is something pious because the gods love it, or do they love it because it is pious?” (Ibid.). McCutcheon’s interpretation is to ask: “[...] in the public university, are we engaged in intuiting transhistorical non empirical essences, feelings, experiences, and so on, or are we studying certain intellectual, historical, social, political, economical—in a word, human—practices and their public, observable effects?” (Ibid.). In the secular classroom, students need to engage with religion as an ensemble of practices or a discourse.

Ringer, however, is concerned with what students adhere to as the knowable, and the “true” as their core beliefs in religion. He questions rhetorical moves from one discourse community to another that open up a “path toward doubt” (“Integrating Faith” 274). He asserts that students, through inquiry of religious beliefs, “are nudged toward a more relativistic position” by attempting to entertain an audience’s conflicting viewpoint (Ibid.). Dan Barker, in his book *godless: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America’s Leading Atheists*, claims such rhetorical moves began changing his evangelical mindset to one of disbelief. Barker alleges his shift began when he accepted that some of his fellow Christians believed the biblical story of Adam and Eve to be metaphorical rather than historical. “[...] I made this little shift in my mind, a move that to most readers would seem simple enough, but to me was a huge and dangerous leap” (*godless* 34). He allows that he originally thought exploring other philosophies would strengthen his beliefs. Instead, it lead to more questions and more shifts away from believing in the inerrancy of the Bible (*godless* 35.) Students who cannot question ideas or interpretations will be unlikely able to conduct an argument in their composition papers, especially, no matter the faith, if their core belief is as Ringer assumes, that other viewpoints than theirs are invalid and wrong to entertain. Barker agrees with Ringer that some religious students will negate other perspectives. Barker explains: “When you are raised to believe that every word in the Bible is God-inspired and inerrant, you can’t lightly moderate your views on scripture” (*godless* 34). Students who can’t

acknowledge different viewpoints due to these kinds of reasons may not be able to write on religion in an academic setting. Although it could change belief systems, Ringer allows that writing on religion gave the student he analyzed “a chance to defend his faith and negotiate an identity as an evangelical at a public university” (“Integrating Faith” 272). Ringer describes the student attempting to write a paper comparing a public school education with receiving an education at a Christian-affiliated school titled “Christian Schools vs. Public Schools” (ibid). Ringer states: “Because Austin’s audience did not share his faith, I knew he would need to find a means of persuasion outside of the evangelical Christian discourse he knew so well as a faithful member of an evangelical campus ministry and local church” (“Integrating Faith” 273). Ringer adds that the student casuistically stretches a biblical passage in order to identify with his possibly non-Christian audience (Ibid.). Ringer doesn’t name the biblical passage, nor explain how it was “stretched” to appeal to an academic audience. In this instance, Ringer is addressing Burke’s notion of casuistically stretching, a concept Burke describes as occurring when “one introduces new principles while theoretically remaining faithful to old principles” (*Attitudes Toward History* 229). This is something that occurred with my student advocating stem cell research as viable while adhering to some doctrine of the Catholic Church. The student applied some new ideas to ingrained ideas, but also was able to examine what he once perceived as unshakable truths. Burke notes that “language owes its very existence to casuistry” (Ibid.). The problem occurs when

students don't realize they are stretching ideas, maybe to unreasonable points. This is addressed later.

Casuistry is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as “the use of clever, but unsound reasoning, especially in philosophy” and “the resolving of moral problems by the application of theoretical rules to particular instances.” Burke and Ringer often apply the second definition. Burke states: “All ‘metaphorical extension’ is an aspect of casuistic stretching. Our proposed methodology to ‘coach’ the transference of words from one category of associations to another, is casuistic” (Ibid.). Thus, it's likely that students will engage in this rhetorical action when attempting to transfer notions of religion from one discourse community to an academic discourse that requires evidence and varied perspectives. Ringer explains that his student, Austin, “subordinates one of his core evangelical beliefs to the pluralistic view that perspectives other than Christianity are legitimate” and that this can threaten a student's belief system (“Integrating Faith” 274). Ringer's concern is that students will be unaware of their rhetorical moves that can include casuistic stretching. As Burke points out, some forms of transferring new information to old principles can result in deceptive ideas, the first definition of casuistic stretching. Burke warns: “The devices for ostensibly retaining an allegiance to an ‘original principal by casuistic stretching eventually lead to demoralization, which can only be stopped by a new start” (*Attitudes Toward History* 229).

Crowley offers an example of this by noting that when the second coming of Christ did not occur by a certain date, as expected by some people, then believers reset the date for His appearance. She writes: “Christ’s failure to reappear on earth has resulted in disappointment and disaffection for some apocalyptists, but others simply renew their efforts to determine the correct time of return” (*Toward a Civil Discourse* 190). This is an example of casuistic stretching in reaching with new ideas to fit into old concepts. It can result in positive or negative outcomes when students attempt to transfer principles of faith (or belief without proof) into an academic setting. That their beliefs could change also can occur. Crowley references Stanley Fish’s book *The Trouble with Principle* in describing a Ku Klux Klansman who changed his beliefs when he was told that people with cleft palates were undesirable to the perfect white race. The Klansman had a daughter with a cleft palate and chose to reject his white supremacist ideology rather than reject his daughter (*Toward a Civil Discourse* 189). Fish notes that the Klansman could easily as well have chosen to reject his daughter (Ibid.). So, moments whereby students’ beliefs might be changed or altered could occur, or students could apply casuistic stretching to fold new conflicting information into their existing ideology. However, these are risks that must be taken if a student is to transfer principles from one community of discourse to another. Students may alter their beliefs, or insist on modulating new information to concur with their old beliefs. Ringer worries that “the very act of putting evangelical faith in dialogue with other perspectives may lead students to



consider their own perspectives as contingent, a realization that could lead to demoralization, dislocation, or even deconversion” (“Integrating Faith” 280). Here, McCutcheon might argue that the caretaking of keeping religious faiths intact belongs outside of the secular university (*Critics Not Caretakers* xi.). Students can make the choice to incorporate their religious beliefs into an academic discourse or to avoid such an engagement and keep beliefs intact by writing about other topics instead. Students need to be willing to examine their own assumptions within the issues they select to write about, religious or otherwise.

Students who choose to write on religion enmeshed with other subjects should be made aware that they will need to consider other viewpoints that may modify or change their beliefs. Ringer suggests that instructors should “make such identity consequences explicit to students” (“Integrating Faith” 274). Ringer writes from the perspective of an evangelical as he identifies as such in his paper. That students may alter their ideology or identity subjectivities in the university setting should not come as a surprise to students no matter the writing topic in question. Ringer, however, sees some value in casuistic stretching as a strategy of negotiating multiple discourse communities. He states that “casuistic stretching may be a means through which students who believe in absolute truth move from dualism to relativism, a key stage of development” (“Integrating Faith” 276). He allows:

Of course, an expectation to identify with peers and the curriculum may not come to fruition—some students, upon encountering pluralism, will retreat toward dualism. But the very *encounter* with pluralism, coupled with the desire for identification, is what can

challenge an individual's belief in absolute truth—a belief held by many evangelicals. (277 *emphasis his*)

While Ringer is concerned about challenging core beliefs, he sees the value of encountering new ideas that conflict with existing values. He writes that Donna LeCourt suggests that the hope is that “students will construct hybrid subjectivities that value various aspects of their identities” (“Integrating Faith” 275). His lament is that for FYW [First-Year Writing] students, such agency may be beyond their abilities. Ringer allows that “For FYW students in particular, that difficulty might arise from a limited discursive repertoire and a lack of awareness regarding the identity consequences of such choices” (273). This is where Ringer notes the problems with “casuistically stretching.” He asks about students taking agency to either align with or avoid new ideas in applying them to their ingrained concepts. “What happens, though, when an FYW student makes a discourse choice he thinks aligns with a core belief or value that in reality conflicts with it?” (Ibid.). The benefits of casuistically stretching, according to Ringer, are that it “can serve as a process through which an individual not only engages with a perspective other than one's own, but also comes potentially to identify with and then interiorize it” (276).

Making moves to re-apply one's ideas from one theory of discourse, or audience (discourse community) to another has its benefits in viewing some ideas with a new lens of a different discourse. But there can be problems, for example, when a student I encountered wanted to apply anti-abortion ideas to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” The student wanted to equate King's

Christianity and advocating of civil rights as synonymous with beliefs in equality for the unborn even though King did not address the issue in his letter. This Burke might describe as a “perversion of casuistry” (*Rhetoric of Motives* 154) with its shifts between abstractions, and that means can be “impure” (155). There are however, books by theologians who have attempted to connect King with abortion issues, which students can be directed to analyze for ideas.

Students must shift from singular absolute ideas, or dualism to plural or multiple perspectives. This is the shift that challenges the belief systems of evangelical Christian students, according to Ringer (“Integrating Faith” 277). He explains: “For FYW students, such encounters with pluralism can occur via the act of writing academically” (Ibid.), and that Carter notes that the goal for academic rhetoric “is often pluralism” (“Living Inside” 578). This is because Carter asserts that some students “live” inside the text of the Bible. Therefore, she surmises that “[...] it seems productive to ask that they [students] think of what it takes to be considered literate within that world” (Ibid.). It would help students to point them to scholarly journals that model this literacy. Montesano has suggested to students that they read scholarly accounts of affirmation of Christianity such as essays by C.S. Lewis and Søren Kierkegaard as well as works by non-believers such as Friedrich Nietzsche. Montesano explains that “Faith, beliefs, and assumptions underlie all discourse, religious or not” (“Religious Faith” 86) and insists:

[...] Discourse is considered “normal” when shared among users of language—among a discourse community. In such cases, language

users understand one another with relatively few challenges. Across discourse communities, though, discourse can be considered “abnormal” because it does not fit the shared faith, beliefs, and assumptions of one of the communities. (Ibid.)

This especially applies to conflicting discourses of faith and reason, religion and academia. The challenge, as Montesano identifies, is to apply the notion that “faith is not exempt from reason” (Ibid.). How students apply reason to explaining faith that does not rely on proof can be a struggle, and may especially conflict with students’ strong identifications with belief systems.

Student identities, religious or not, will likely be confronted when students are presented with new perspectives on controversial issues in the composition classroom. Melanie Kill, writing on “Acknowledging the Rough Edges of Resistance Negotiation of Identities for First-Year Composition,” does not address religion. However, she does address that “self-presentation is always a product of negotiation, and, consequently, we are likely to fall into defensive positions when the stability we rely on to negotiate these presentations is threatened” (215). She adds that genres and discourses “establish possible subject positions and provide for their attainment as meaningful performances of identity” (“Acknowledging the Rough” 217). Students who refuse to consider other viewpoints than their own will not write a successful and balanced paper, no matter the topic. Scholars suggest that it is essential that students define terms and issues. Carter offers an example of her request to a student who identified as Christian to define the difference between being “a child that goes to church” and being “a churchly child” (575), a difference that was described by the

student of just going through the motions of attending church versus attending it with a “feeling” or experience of faith and then defining faith, respectively.

In addition, students need to be mindful of a variety of discourse communities even within their own personal communities. Jonathan S. Cullick, editor of the first Longman Pearson composition textbook solely on the topic of religion, *Religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, suggests students consider that learning occurs when disagreements take place and that there will be discourse differences even among the like-minded. He points out that “diversity means not only people of different religions but also people with different ideas about the same religion” (xxiv.). He states that in such cases even scriptural appeals can take on different interpretations and lose their effectiveness in argument. Students should be encouraged to acknowledge different interpretations of their sources within their own discourse communities, especially in different scriptural interpretations.

LeCourt addresses student identities, although she does not specifically address religion. In *Identity Matters: Schooling the Student Body in Academic Discourse*, she explains that she attempted to teach to students who were at-risk for dropping out of school. These students were perceived as dropout risks due to their avoidance of personal identity conflicts. She describes how students are influenced by multiple cultural discourses. LeCourt says: “We don’t live identity only in a discursive realm, we live it in interactions with other people in cultural spaces continually overdetermined by material realities of poverty, racism, violence, and

threat as well as the more corporeal investments we have in maintaining particular social relations with others” (2). She suggests that “We live identity, that is, as social beings, as bodies, not just minds” (Ibid.). She further explains this idea about how one’s race or gender as a body influences identity issues (15). Also, it is the discourse of a particular social community that a student most identifies with that can be of the greatest influence in forming ideologies. LeCourt states: “I understood, that is, why so many of my friends dropped out of school; they did so in favor of maintaining alliances with the culture we grew up in, one which seemed diametrically opposed to the one school was asking us to inhabit” (Ibid.). Students immersed in some religious beliefs, may be overwhelmed with maintaining those personal social alliances or commitments rather than engaging in academic discourse that can question their familiar identities.

LeCourt focuses on issues of economic class, especially students of the lower class strata who were too uncomfortable engaging in the discourse community of the middle class, one that they encountered in a particular college setting. She describes how students from the lower class disengaged from academia rather than negotiating middle class values. She states “Leaving school, my friends understood, was to opt out of the middle class” (2-3). Perhaps this occurred because the students were faced with changing discourse communities completely with no validity given to their initial communities of discourse. LeCourt further explains: “My early childhood friends understood that culture is not only an act of perception or construction, it is

also a material experience in the world that allowed one to do certain things: to maintain social ties, to seek out forms of success, to desire certain modes of being” (3).

LeCourt writes of a student she calls “Sheila” as being conflicted with wanting to disassociate with the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. Sheila expressed a desire to leave the church after engaging in university courses that discussed concepts of feminism and classicism that caused her to re-evaluate some church doctrine (4). LeCourt states that Sheila could embrace academic views only at the cost of impacting her marriage and facing church excommunication. LeCourt writes: “I recommended accepting her ‘school’ subject positions and her ‘church’ ones as parts of a multiple subject wherein contradictions need not be resolved, but Sheila rejected my attempt to see the fluidity of identity as part of how culture could be lived” (Ibid.). The identity with one discourse was too contested in the social community of another discourse, one that contained absolute truths. LeCourt explains that Sheila stood to “lose her children, husband, and other family members. Altering the way she perceived the world affected more than her own ability to enact agency; it would change how her body literally lived culture in ways that she, quite understandably, could not accept” (Ibid.). Nonetheless, Sheila was able to engage with other cultural perspectives and community discourses in her papers (3). The student was considered successful in academia, but not by the student’s own considerations of her personal life despite LeCourt’s legitimizing different discourse

communities in her classroom. This is just one case study that emphasizes risks of crossing boundaries of discourse communities when religion is one of those communities.

While legitimizing religion as a discourse, Carter's method allows students to understand that they are simultaneously literate in some discourses and not as literate in others. Discourse is then situated. It is an approach that has value in teaching students what Carter describes as "the critical consciousness" (579) to approach multiple texts. She describes "critical consciousness" as "awareness of one's subject position and the partial and socially situated nature of one's understanding of the world" (Ibid.) rather than embracing a stance of a subject proposing a universal "truth." This approach views the language and culture of religion as a discourse that can then be described, compared to other discourses and re-described. Like other discourses based on New Literacy Studies, Carter asserts that this approach "redefines literacy education" (Ibid.) as *not* being:

[...] a set of stable, portable, rule-based skills that enable the user to encode and decode all texts "correctly," regardless of the type of text, the conditions under which the text is encoded/decoded, the purpose of the text, the people surrounding the text, the place in which the text is situated [...].

Instead, approaching religion as a literacy allows students a lens in which to examine the "un-examinable," what Downs would view as filling the gap "to reconcile the irreconcilable" (49). To do this, students must define their terms, and view them through the lens of opposing perspectives (describe and re-describe).



Using the example of McKibben’s “Driving Global Warming” essay, the editor of *The New World Reader*, Gilbert Muller, offers the opportunity for students to analyze religion with the response questions “What evidence do you find in the essay that suggests he [McKibben] writes for an audience interested in religious matters?” and “What assumptions does he make about his intended audience?” (463) as McKibben writes from a Christian stance on the environment in an essay intended for a Christian audience. His article in *The New World Reader*—one of the textbooks in this study—was originally published in a Christian magazine. Using the response questions, students can then identify the religious terms, references, and codes and define them. Then Muller proposes the question: “To what extent do you feel you are a member of that [Christian] readership? Explain.” (Ibid.). Students can then be directed to an argument engaging with religious responses to environmental questions. However, there can be a problem if students identify with McKibben’s perspective and then write about what they believe “pleases God” environmentally, as McKibben poses that notion. This is where McCutcheon’s strategy of analysis defining, describing, comparing, and re-describing is useful to address what he proposes is “[...] *the* issue at the heart of the academic study of religion: is our object of analysis a preexistent essence we simply recognize, or is it instead the product of social practices and institutions?” (*Critics* 219, *emphasis his*).

McCutcheon’s method of analysis is intended for an introductory course on religion and not the composition classroom. Nonetheless, there is value in engaging

students in the task of defining, and describing the terms in the community of discourse they are writing on. How students define and classify objects or concepts is a good start to exploring issues. McCutcheon insists that the two ways of defining religion are essentialist (which acknowledges the primacy of metaphysical essences), or constructionist which acknowledges that ideologies are socially constructed (Ibid.). Tim Murphy, in *Guide to the Study of Religion* addresses this:

Neither the language nor the mind is seen as a mirror which reflects the essential content of reality. Instead, both are seen as productive activities which construct the object that they apprehend. Discourse theory has argued that this happens at two levels: at the level of verbal discourse, the text constructs its object; and at the sociological level, society is constructed of and by its discourse. (“Discourse” 400)

These notions indicate that society and religion can be viewed as sociological constructs of discourse. Murphy carries this notion out further by referring to society and religion both as “ensemble[s] of discourses” (“Discourse” 401). He states that society is not some substance “which exists under or behind particular manifestations; it is simply the ongoing practice of various and multiple articulations” (Ibid.). Murphy places “religion” and “culture” along with “society” in the same categories, in this respect (Ibid.).

The concept of religion as a discourse is problematic for students that Carter describes as “living in the Book” or through the textual references and interpretations of the Bible (“Living Inside” 578). However, she notes that the primary goal of a composition course requires students to talk to those who live outside the “Book,” a

pluralistic goal rather than a goal of seeking to convert the student. She would ask students to describe their religious literacy. She asserts:

To articulate this position would not require writers to accept the secular world as ultimately more valuable than the religious one (or even vice versa) but rather to help those not “Christian-literate” understand what it takes to be considered a literate member of a biblically-written world. (Ibid.)

This requires students to demonstrate how people engage with the text, a socially-situated concept, rather than engaging with absolute, universal ideas. Carter also addresses this with: “Literacy thus becomes both a set of socially sanctioned, community-based ‘skills’ and *content* that is validated, produced, and reproduced within that same community of practice” (“Living Inside” 579, *emphasis hers*).

Carter proposes that students can engage in both religious and academic discourses without replacing one with the other by practicing rhetorical dexterity (574). However, negotiating religion in the academic setting is especially problematic when religion arrives unannounced and unexamined in composition textbooks intended for the secular classroom in a rhetoric of affirmation that precludes inquiry. Religion does exist in secular composition textbooks often without containing a pedagogy for negotiating the sacred in secular writing classrooms. These textbooks are not receiving scholarly scrutiny and usually do not present students or instructors with the apparatus to question their own “certainties.” Religion is already in the textbooks without there being a pedagogy strategizing how first-year writing instruction and religion can work together to engage students in academic

arguments about issues of faith and belief (as is described in more detail in Chapter Two). More scholarly investigation is needed into acknowledging and negotiating with religion in the writing classroom. Until then, students and instructors will grapple with the topic in many mass-marketed textbooks in accordance with the rhetoric and authority of each particular textbook. The results of this study demonstrate that textbooks do not engage in methods of persuading readers to adopt an attitude of inquiry toward a contested topic. (This is discussed at length in Chapter One.) In addressing social issues such as “racial discrimination, economic injustices and inequities of class,” Hairston maintains that writing teachers “have no business getting into areas where we may have passion and conviction but no scholarly base from which to operate” (*Diversity, Ideology* 667). This can especially pertain to the topic of religion.

However, viewing all these issues as discourse communities can offer a way to examine them in an academic setting. Hairston does allow that composition students can write on religion as long as the instructor acts as a “midwife,” “an agent for change rather than a transmitter of knowledge” (673). This sounds simple, but as James Berlin responds to Hairston, “A rhetoric can never be innocent” (“Rhetoric, Ideology” 679). Rather it “can never be a disinterested arbiter of the ideological claims of others because it is always already serving certain ideological claims” (679-70). Therefore a teacher will struggle with being an agent for change when students are given examples of images and texts presented as self-evident in

textbooks on a subject whereby there is resistance to engaging in various perceptions or argument of any kind. While the safest route for the instructor is to avoid religion and ignore the articles in textbooks that address it, Vander Lei's notion poses the possibility that by grappling with the issues that are already in the classroom (sometimes the elephant in the room) "we can do a better job of helping students recognize and respond to inappropriate rhetorical uses of religious faith in both academic and civic discourse" (*Coming to Terms* 3).

Addressing religion as a discourse will not be possible for some students who should then write on topics they can explore from a perspective of inquiry. Textbook co-editor Ruskiewicz maintains that instructors negatively reviewed texts on religion in some of his textbooks due to student resistance because "they do not want their faith to become a topic in a writing course" (interview 2012). This most often occurs with those who adhere to fundamental beliefs, no matter the religion. Thus, there is some scholarship on negotiating religion in the writing course as a discourse. But there is paltry pedagogy on the challenges when classroom inquiry clashes with fundamental religions.

One of the problems with writing about religion concerns using sacred texts as sources. Students including religion in their papers will need to examine such sources. Crowley explains that reason often clashes with the faith demanded of sacred texts, but rather using persuasion through other narratives can be effective, especially since such sacred texts often involve persuasion through storytelling

genres. She claims: “Story is, perhaps, the most efficient means of garnering attention. I use this term here in the ancient rhetorical sense, where it refers to some exemplary narrative, historical or fictional, that makes a point by illustration or comparison” (*Toward a Civil Discourse* 197-198). Crowley points to ancient rhetorician Aristotle and states: “Aristotle says that examples are effective because they serve as witnesses. Coincidentally or not, *witnessing* is the term used by Christian fundamentalists to designate conversion attempts. The telling of exemplary stories is a common tactic during such attempts” (198 *emphasis original*). Crowley briefly references an incident conveyed by Susan F. Harding, who “recounts an afternoon with a persuasive preacher who witnessed to her chiefly by telling stories about the aimless and meaningless life that he led before his own conversion” (ibid).

Harding published another article, “Convicted by the Holy Spirit: The Rhetoric of Fundamental Baptist Conversion.” The essay, published in the journal *American Ethnologist*, interestingly takes on a narrative format as Harding begins one section with “Dusk had fallen by the time I left Covenant Baptist Church” (169). She relates her attempt to garner information as a social scientist from a minister who attempted to convert her to his religion during her interview with a Reverend Cantrell [no first name for the reverend is given]. Upon leaving the interview, Harding was nearly in a car accident. She asked herself aloud “What is God trying to tell me?” (Ibid.) and noted: “It was my voice, but not my language. I had been invaded by the fundamental Baptist tongue I was investigating [...] If we conceive of

conversion as a process of acquiring a specific religious language, I was initiated into fundamental Baptist conversion” (Ibid.). Harding’s interviews indicate that “Among fundamental Baptists, rhetoric, not ritual, is the primary vehicle of conversion,” and “Witnesses ‘speak the gospel,’ the ramifying discourse and narrative of Christ” (167). This demonstrates that narrative is significant to the rhetoric of conversion. Crowley suggests, “I think we overlook how often all of us use stories as means of persuasion (*Toward a Civil Discourse* 198). Harding demonstrates the persuasive power of stories used in conversion narratives, and Crowley offers that stakeholders in particular narratives can be swayed through the use of presenting conflicting ideas through storytelling. As an example of the rhetoric of narrative, Crowley insists: “Conservative Christian activists know this, and that’s why they have written Calvinist Christianity into the story of the founding of the United States” (Ibid.). She offers a solution to counter narrative with narrative when issues are contested. Crowley adds that “Those of us who want to preserve a space for secular negotiation and discussion would do well to construct and tell exemplary stories about America’s founding that serves those purposes” (Ibid.). A pervasive injective in the journalism is to “put a human face” into a story. People are not often swayed by facts, figures, and statistics. For example, students opposed to stem cell research are nevertheless often willing to discuss the “story” of my former student who wrote in favor of it when he was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig’s disease. Suddenly, it is a fellow student, and fellow “believer” facing a contested issue, not unlike Fish’s Ku

Klux Klan member who faced the dilemma of accepting a daughter with a perceived disfigurement or abandoning her for Klan ideology (*Toward a Civil Discourse* 189).

These identity markers are given examples or “witnesses” when actual people are involved in the issues. Crowley gives another example of how narrative can be used in persuasion. She explains that “It follows that liberal and leftist rhetors should not only tell audiences that they support universal health care; they should depict the world as it would exist with this policy in place, and they should depict it with all the pathos and compelling detail they can muster” (*Toward a Civil Discourse* 199). She further relates, “A rhetor who wants to alter beliefs has to arouse an affective response—to get attention” (Ibid.). In the case of several scholars analyzed in this study, they are not seeking to alter beliefs as much as seeking to engage students with at least entertaining the beliefs of others. This seems to be the greatest challenge, to perceive that a conflicting viewpoint, no matter the topic, may have some validity. Stories are attention-getters. Crowley notes that “rhetors cannot afford to ignore the values held by those whose beliefs they wish to change” (200). While instructors don’t expect students to change beliefs, they can encourage students to examine those values that entail that there is only one right answer or “absolute truth” to any particular situation.

Other than through narratives, students can also be encouraged to examine religion by attempting to apply reason to faith. Montesano asserts that “faith is not exempt from reason” (“Religious Faith” 86). He writes that he insists to students



“that their arguments be well reasoned, their assumptions and warrants examined and clearly owned, and their discourse generally respectful with peers whom they might disagree” (Ibid.) in his attempts to describe the rhetorical in religion. Montesano describes having two different students from two different semesters who each asked to write that the solution to all human problems was the “acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior” (Ibid.). He responds: “This was a test for me. If I told them that there was no way that one could prove this to an audience of both believers and nonbelievers, what would this say about my earlier assertion that religious rhetoric was on par with secular rhetoric?” (Ibid.). It should be noted that Montesano taught composition classes to students enrolled in the Department of Religious Studies at Arizona State University. He taught argument in the course “Religion in the Modern World.” Montesano told the students to “make their assumptions clear to nonbelievers and to realize those limitations” rather than to maintain a stance of preaching to the choir (Ibid.). He directed one student to read *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis in order to read a defense of Christianity with assumptions and claims that had some supporting information. Montesano allows that the student “did a fine job of articulating her own beliefs” but might not have been persuasive to her agnostic classmates (87). His second student, not willing to examine religious claims or engage in any scholastic research initially, did not fare as well in early drafts of his paper, but later did some research of Kierkegaard that Montesano directed him to and wrote a better paper.

Unfortunately, not all composition teachers will be familiar with religious scholarship to direct students to texts that both affirm and refute particular religious beliefs. And few first-year students can successfully read and understand Lewis and Kierkegaard. Instead, their papers can result in altar calls, and in locating authority in church leaders rather than scholars, as has occurred in some first papers received by scholars examined in this project. Rather than to conduct scholarly research, some students might choose to select new topics other than religion as some first-year writing students might claim that the scholarly journals are too difficult to read and understand.

There is also a problem of resistance that can lead to disengagement with the class. Montesano tells of a student who identified as Christian who walked out of class discussion concerning a letter from a “Christian gay man speaking about the abuse he suffered through the hands of the church and other Christian figures in his life” (91). The student never returned to class and did not withdraw. So, he ultimately failed the course. Montesano had previously told the student “I believe that any faith worth keeping should be able to stand up to critical scrutiny. People need to learn to encounter all kinds of opinions in faith. To hide from them is to have a sheltered and shallow faith” (Ibid.). He notes that the student disagreed with those assertions and that precipitated the student leaving the classroom for good. Montesano’s course is unique in that it isn’t a standard composition course, but rather one with a theme of modern world religions. Therefore, discussing religion

occurs during the typical class in such a course. Religion is not often held under such scrutiny in the traditional university secular composition course, but it does come up as a topic and will need to come under questioning when it does arrive in class discussion, textbooks, or incorporated into student position paper proposals. Roen, who co-wrote “Religious Faith, Learning and Writing: Challenges in the Classroom” along with Montesano, describes how students pre-writing in learning logs before classroom discussions are given opportunities “to emote before coming to class, which can help to reduce the quantity of in-class-emoting” (93) and better prepare students to discuss critical thinking.

Michael-John DePalma, in “Re-envisioning Religious Discourses as Rhetorical Resources in Composition Teaching: A Pragmatic Response to the Challenge of Belief,” suggests that academic and religious discourses not be presented as opposing fixed languages. He addresses the notion that academic language is not fixed and stable, and that having been in school for many years, students have incorporated academic language into their experiences (225). He states however, that there is no standard academic discourse. Rather than viewing deviations from a presumed standard discourse community as problematic, DePalma quotes Suresh J. Canagarajah that student deviations might be considered “as a strategic design to create new discourses” (Canagarajah 591).

No matter the strategies to engage students with opposing views of discourse, there is value in students’ exploration of multiple viewpoints. LeCourt studies how

students negotiate academic language and culture through literacy autobiographies written by both basic writers and graduate students. She asserts:

When writers approach a new manifestation of discourse, or when difficulties with using a discourse's language arise, they become more aware of a discourse that is exterior to their sense of self. This awareness allows the writers more insight into the ways in which academic discourse may be seeking. Or has sought, to act upon them. (*Identity Matters* 9).

LeCourt describes academic language with the term “schooled language” (10). This designates “anything written or spoken within the institution for an authority of that institution (e.g. teachers, journals, professional communities, etc.)” (Ibid.). While instructors do give students different audiences to write for, there is an academic standard of writing that they must meet. This is where the notion of “schooled” writing can come into play. LeCourt speaks of other “competing cultural discourses” that students may maintain literacy (11). These discourses include those that are “linked to culturally determined groupings of persons, most probably influenced by race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, gender, region, and religion” (Ibid.). In addition to cultural and societal constructions of identity, LeCourt asserts, through her study of literacy autobiographies written by students, that “academic discourse *does* influence the construction of self” (143 *emphasis hers*).

#### 4.4 Conclusion

Possibilities are promising for entertaining a perspective favoring a rhetorical or discourse-oriented pedagogy in order to allow students to negotiate the complexities of religion in argument rather than marginalizing religion. This is risk-

taking, and instructors must rely on their “faith” of academic inquiry in maintaining the objectives of meeting composition goals in writing an argument paper that requires students to engage in various perspectives and not shutting down argument with any singular absolute truth, one from the religious realm or otherwise. In any case, developing an understanding that there is a rhetoric of religion in composition textbooks results in instructors preparing to negotiate the presence of what is defined as sacred in secular writing spaces. Even using the words like “sacred” and “holy” can be problematic according to McCutcheon, in containing an element of persuasion that something is dedicated or consecrated to God, and therefore the terms present evidence of the divine. He claims:

To reproduce such a rhetoric in our scholarship is none other than to engage in a kind of anti-intellectualism that merely reproduces the obscurantist claims of apoliticism (sic.) or spiritualism embedded within such talk of the sacred, the holy, spirits, impulses, charismas, and indescribable essences (*Critics* 67).

While McCutcheon’s insistence that all language terms be defined in argument makes a valid point, viewing religious terms as a discourse doesn’t necessarily invoke anti-intellectualism. He is correct in that religious terms need to be defined as a way of describing the stakes in the argument. In many cases what he calls “re-describing” involves new vocabularies or constructions of discourse in order that terms are examinable so that “their usefulness is based in the vocabularies of scholarship rather than the vocabularies of the communities we study” (*Critics* 23). For example, McCutcheon would describe religion as a social practice rather than

accepting a definition of “a universal human impulse of fundamental, deep, real and therefore self-evident value” (Ibid.). The value McCutcheon places on religion is one of being a social formation of beliefs and practices and “a collection of data in need of explanation” (*Critics* 24).

There is a way to engage students in critical thinking while addressing topics of religion, but it is difficult and can result in students disengaging from the classroom. Downs notes: “One of the greatest challenges in negotiating religious faith in writing classes is helping students whose faith precludes inquiry learn to be inquiringly faithful” (“True Believers” 39). By this he means that students who hold particularly strong beliefs in various issues need to learn to be able to question perceived absolute truths, or to at least entertain and acknowledge other perspectives and interpretations of those beliefs. Vander Lei also addresses this with “Ultimately, this is what we really hope for our students, not that they alter what they believe but that they learn to use tension between faith (their own and that of others) and academic inquiry as a way of learning more and learning better” (“Coming to Terms” 8). Carter suggests that this can be done by “treating secular and Bible-based literacies as situated, contextualized, place-based, people-oriented events” (“Living in the Bible” 592). Carter’s strategy of treating religion as a discourse and McCutcheon’s method of defining, describing, and re-describing of terms is also significant to carrying out the treatment of religion as a discourse. In this way we

may help students to write about religion while maintaining the flexibility to step back from absolute truths, a learning skill that can apply across disciplines.

Although both Ringer and Anderson question altering faiths by examining them, students have a choice about what they want to write about. Anderson asks if instructors are not giving students “the right to their own language but implicitly and explicitly offering a model of what we think of as a better, more sophisticated, understanding of religious experience” (“Description of an Embarrassment” 26). Nonetheless, even Anderson allows that religious discourses must be examined in the secular composition classroom and finally notes:

My faith is in analysis, irony, self-examination, applied to religious experience as to anything else. My faith is in complexity which is complex enough not to deny the possibility of any origin, and this complexity, I think, can best be brought to us in language, and in literary language in particular. (“Description” 26-27)

Part of the academic experience involves self-examination, no matter the discourse, and complexity of analysis, no matter the topic in order to engage in higher order thinking skills. This cannot be done when religion is not negotiated as a discourse in a secular space. One thing instructors can do is to provide tools to analyze religion. McCutcheon explains that “What to do with ‘religion’ as an analytical construct will then be left up to our students once they have gained some of the critical analysis that we should have to offer them. As teachers we should recognize that this is as it should be” (*Critics Not Caretakers* 236). For example, it should be pointed out when readings are written through a lens of religion instructors

should ask just what that lens means to students as an audience, especially if a student affiliates with another religion.

In the secular university composition course, religion comes through the door of the classroom in the embodiment of students and instructors, through the news of the day, and especially, in many composition textbooks already in classroom use. As is pointed out in Chapter Three, the global climate of civil and religious wars and skirmishes continue to proliferate. Discussion in the public sphere of religion escalates, and news of the day often ends up in textbooks with each new edition. Religion has been in composition anthologies since their inception, especially in Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" one of the highest ranking reprints in textbook history, according to the database analyzed by Bloom ("The Essay Canon" 426). How can we tell students that they can read about a master rhetorician such as King, who references the Bible and engages in religious ideas, but then tell students not to emulate the textbook, one that was a required textbook in the spring 2013 semester at The University of Texas of the Permian Basin—a textbook that also contains "Thoughts from the Tao-te-Ching" (Jacobus 21)? Both King's letter and the excerpts from the Tao-te-Ching were required reading for the 1301 course from the eighth edition of *A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers*. This particular textbook also is one of the top sixteen titles listed by publishers as most popular in the textbooks examined in this study. King, while referencing religious discourse manages to do so in "Birmingham Jail" without



professing faith or engaging in prayer. In fact, his rhetoric attempts to appeal to wider audiences by referencing Bible stories without engaging in debate as to whether he accepts them as absolute truth or not. King states:

Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their “thus saith the Lord” far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid. (214).

Here King is responding to seven clergymen and a rabbi as his primary audience (Jacobus 213). He is also appealing to the American public via characters in the Bible. But his thrust in the letter is to spread the message of civil rights while textbook editor Jacobus states that King’s primary message in life was in spreading the Christian message. Jacobus states “King works with this rhetorical tradition not only because it is effective but because it resonates with the deepest aspect of his calling—spreading the gospel of Christ” (212). It can be argued that the larger message of King’s letter was in King’s words, to right civil rights injustices. King writes, in the “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” “I am in Birmingham because injustice is here” and “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” (Ibid.). While Christianity may have been King’s deepest calling, he does not overtly seek to convert those not of Judeo-Christian faiths in his famed letter. The challenge is to ask students about King’s various audiences, to see beyond the religious code words of some of their faiths and to demonstrate that in his writing he does manage to avoid

proselytizing the Christian message where he does preach the “gospel” of equality as a primary message. King performs Carter’s notion of “rhetorical dexterity” by engaging in several discourses, the languages of Christianity, equality, national laws, and politics. Unfortunately, it is often confusing to some students who may view all of those discourses through a faith-based lens. A couple of students at The University of Texas of the Permian Basin wrote that the Bible states “all men were created equal” since King notes that equal rights are “God-given rights” (King 217). King does not address what those “God-given rights” are. Therefore, King’s letter must have terms defined, described, compared, and finally re-described in an academic discourse.

In this particular situation, when the textbook is required and a text is required reading that references religion, it should be noted in the syllabus, according to Barbara A. Lea, so that students are forewarned who may be offended by reading religious ideas that are outside of their faith affiliations (“Religion in the Classroom” 113). Lea claims that “There have been lawsuits in which students object to assignments or other course requirements because the topic is offensive to their religious beliefs or they are not allowed to address the topic from the perspective of their religious beliefs” (105). Lea also recommends offering alternate assignments to students offended by a particular text (113). Some instructors would likely disagree with offering an alternate assignment to King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” as it is valuable on various levels and offers students an opportunity to view rhetorical

dexterity at work. Addressing that religion will be a topic of King's letter—especially Christianity—in the syllabus is sufficient and those who don't want to examine religion can take another course. This, however, is a problem when certain texts are required across the board in a particular course for a university. In this case, instructors must take the risk of there being offense in the classroom, and do their best to teach students the appropriate language codes for the appropriate situations, a most difficult task, but one that is likely already occurring in many classrooms across the country as evidenced by the most popular sixteen textbooks from 1990 to 2012.

## Works Cited

- Ackley, Katherine Anne, ed. *Perspectives on Contemporary Issues: Readings across the Disciplines*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College, 2000. Print.
- Anderson, Chris. "The Description of an Embarrassment: When Students Write About Religion." *Balancing Acts: Essays on the Teaching of Writing in Honor of William F. Irmischer*. Eds. William F. Irmischer, Virginia A. Chappell, Mary Louise Buley-Meissner, and Chris Anderson. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1991. 19-27. Print.
- Angelou, Maya. "Graduation." 1969. *Crossing Cultures: Readings for Composition*. Annie Knepler, Ellie Knepler, and Myrna Knepler, eds. 6th ed. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2003. 21-30. Print.
- Barker, Dan. *Godless: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists*. Berkeley: Ulysses Press, 2008. Print.
- Barnett, Timothy, ed. *Teaching Argument in the Composition Course: Background Readings*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002. Print.
- Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University." *Cross-talk in Comp Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1997. 589-619. Print.
- Bass, S. Jonathan. *Blessed are the peacemakers: Martin Luther King, Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the "Letter from Birmingham Jail."* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001. Print.

- Bérubé, Michael. *What's Liberal About the Liberal Arts? Classroom Politics and Bias in Higher Education*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006. Print.
- Bitzer, Lloyd F. "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 1.1 (Jan. 1998): 1-14. Penn State University Press. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.
- Blakesley, David. *The Elements of Dramatism*. New York: Longman, 2002. Print.
- Bloom, Lynn Z. "The Essay Canon." *College English* 61.4 (March 1999): 401-430. March 1999. Web. 30 March 2013.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Once More to the Essay Canon." *On Anthologies: Politics and Pedagogy*. Ed. Jeffrey R. Di Leo. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004. Print.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Writing Textbooks in/for Times of Trauma." Ed. Shane Borrowman. *Trauma and the Teaching of Writing*. Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2005. 127-40. Print.
- Bly, Robert. "Iron John." *Perspectives on Contemporary Issues: Readings across the Disciplines*. Ed. Katherine Anne Ackley. 2nd ed. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College, 2000. 59-68. Print.
- Boyarin, Daniel. *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 2004. Print.
- Braun, Willi. "Religion." Braun, Willi, and Russell T. McCutcheon. eds. *Guide to the Study of Religion*. London: Cassell, 2000. 3-18. Print.

- Brooks, David. "One Nation: Enriched by Biblical Wisdom." 2004. *Perspectives on Contemporary Issues: Readings across the Disciplines*. Ed. Katherine Anne Ackley. 4th ed. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College, 2006. 323-25. Print.
- Burke, Kenneth. *Language as Symbolic Action*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966. Print.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970. Print.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Attitudes Toward History*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984. Print.
- \_\_\_\_\_. A Rhetoric of Motives. Berkeley: U of California P, 1969. Print. 1991. 19-27. Print.
- Canagarajah, A. Suresh. "Toward a Writing Pedagogy of Shuttling between Languages: Learning from Multilingual Writers." *College English* 68.6 (2006): 589–604. Print.
- Carter, Shannon. *The Way Literacy Lives: Rhetorical Dexterity and Basic Writing Instruction*. Albany: State University of New York, 2008. Print.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Living Inside the Bible (Belt)." *College English* 69.6 (July 2007): 572-595. Web. 6 Aug. 2011.
- Carter, Stephen. *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion*. New York: Basic Books, 1993. Print.
- Catron, Peggy. "Blinking in the Sunlight: Exploring the Fundamentalist Perspective." *Encountering Faith in the Classroom: Turning Difficult*

- Discussions into Constructive Engagement*. Ed. Miriam Rosalyn Diamond. Sterling, VA: Stylus Pub., 2008. 65-76. Print.
- Colombo, Gary, Robert Cullen, and Bonnie Lisle, eds. *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*. 7th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. Print.
- Conners, Robert. *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh Press, 1997. Print.
- Crowley, Sharon. *Toward a Civil Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. Print.
- Cullen, Robert. Personal Interview. 8 Sept. 2011.
- Cullick, Jonathan S. ed. *Religion in the 21st Century*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2009. Print.
- Di Leo, Jeffrey R. "Analyzing Anthologies." *On Anthologies: Politics and Pedagogies*. Ed. Jeffrey R. Di Leo. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2004. 1-30. Print.
- Divakaruni, Chitra B., ed. *Multitude: Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers*. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 1997. Print.
- Dively, Ronda Leathers. "The Religious Rhetor in the Secular Academy: Identifying and Transcending Discursive Boundaries." *Kansas English* 81.2 (1996): 45-51.

- “Censoring Religious Rhetoric in the Composition Classroom: What We and Our Students May be Missing.” *Composition Studies* 25.1 (Spring 1997): 54-67.
- Douglass, Frederick. “My Early Years.” 1892. *Multitude: Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers*. Ed. Chitra B. Divakaruni. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997. 41-47. Print.
- Downs, Douglas. “True Believers, Real Scholars, and Real True Believing Scholars: Discourses of Inquiry and Affirmation in the Composition Classroom.” Vander Lei, Elizabeth, and Bonnie Lenore Kyburz. eds. *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2005. Print. 39-55.
- Durkheim, Émile and Marcel Mauss. *Primitive Classification*. Needham, Rodney ed. And trans. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963. Print
- Eastland, Terry, ed. *Religious Liberty in the Supreme Court: The Cases That Define the Debate over Church and State*. Lanham, MD: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1993. Print.
- Eastman, Arthur M., ed. *The Norton Reader; an Anthology of Expository Prose*. New York: Norton, 1969. Print.
- Edelman, Murray. *Politics as Symbolic Action*. Chicago: Markham Publishing Co., 1971. Print.



- Fell, Gilbert S. "Explorations into Linguistic Practice as a Source of Religious Polarities, or the Inevitability of Ineffability." *Language in Religion*. Eds. Allison Armstrong and Humphrey Tonkin. Lanham: UP of America, 1989. 7-15.
- Finke, Laurie. "The Hidden Curriculum." *On Anthologies: Politics and Pedagogies*. Ed. Jeffrey R. Di Leo. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2004. 395-404. Print.
- Ford, Marjorie, and Jon Ford, eds. *Dreams and Inward Journeys: A Reader for Writers*. New York: Harper & Row, 1990. Print.
- Fuentes, Carlos. "The Two Americas." 1994. *Making Contact: Readings from Home and Abroad*. Ed. Carol J. Verburg. Boston: Bedford, 1997. 100-16. Print.
- Gornick, Vivian. "Twice an Outsider: On Being Jewish and a Woman." 1986. *Multitude: Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers*. Ed. Chitra B. Divakaruni. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997. 293-299. Print.
- Hairston, Maxine. "Diversity, Ideology and Teaching Writing." 1992. *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1997. 659-75. Print.
- Hansen, Kristine. "Religious Freedom in the Public Square and in the Composition Classroom." *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom*. Ed. Elizabeth Vander Lei and Bonnie Lenore Kuburz. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2005. 24-38. Print.

- Harding, Susan F. "Convicted by the Holy Spirit: The Rhetoric of Fundamental Baptist Conversion." *American Ethnologist* 14. 1 (1987): 167-181. Web. 2 Apr. 2009.
- Helscher, Thomas P. "The Subject of Genre." *Genre Writing: Issues, Arguments, Alternatives.* Eds. Wendy Bishop and Hans Ostrom. Portsmouth: NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1997. 27-36. Print.
- Hirsch, E. D. *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know.* Melbourne: Schwartz Pub., 1989. Print.
- Jacobus, Lee A., ed. *A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers.* 5th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998. Print.
- Jacobus, Lee A. Personal Interview. 19 April 2012.
- Jacobus, Lee A., ed. *A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers.* 8th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010. Print.
- Kill, Melanie. "Acknowledging the Rough Edges of Resistance: Negotiation of Identities for First-Year Composition." *College Composition and Communication* 58.2 (2012): 213-35. *JSTOR*. Web. 9 Nov. 2012.
- King, Don W. "The English Professor as Teacher Scholar: Reflections of Faith and Learning Integration." *The Word in the English Classroom: Best Practices of Faith Integration.* Eds. Jamie Dessart and Brad Gambill. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian UP, 2009. 115-45. Print.

- King, Martin Luther, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail." *A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers*. 8th ed. Ed. Lee A. Jacobus. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010. 210-231. Print.
- Kirszner, Laurie G., and Stephen R. Mandell, eds. *The Blair Reader*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991. Print.
- Knepler, Annie, Ellie Knepler, and Myrna Knepler, eds. *Crossing Cultures: Readings for Composition*. 6th ed. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2003. Print.
- Koon, Kyle. Personal Interview. 3 Aug. 2011.
- Lave, Jean, and Etienne Wenger. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1991. Print.
- Lea, Barbara A. "Religion in the Classroom: Legal Issues." *Encountering Faith in the Classroom: Turning Difficult Discussions into Constructive Engagement*. Ed. Miriam Rosalyn Diamond. Sterling, VA: Stylus Pub., 2008.102-115. Print.
- Lease, Gary. "Ideology." Braun, Willi, and Russell T. McCutcheon. eds. *Guide to the Study of Religion*. London: Cassell, 2000. 438-447. Print.
- LeCourt, Donna. *Identity Matters: Schooling the Student Body in Academic Discourse*. Albany: State University of New York, 2004. Print.
- Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. New York: Macmillan, 1943. Print.

- Loa-tzu. "Thoughts from the Tao te-Ching." Jacobus, Lee A., ed. *A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers*. 8th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010. 21-35. Print.
- Lunsford, Andrea A., and John J. Ruszkiewicz, eds. *The Presence of Others: Readings for Critical Thinking and Writing*. New York: St. Martin's, 1994. Print.
- Lunsford, Andrea A., and John J. Ruszkiewicz, eds. *The Presence of Others: Voices and Images That Call for Response*. 4th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004. Print.
- Maasik, Sonia, ed. *Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers*. Boston: Bedford, 1997. Print.
- Malinowitz, Harriet. "The Uses of Literacy in a Globalized, Post-September World." *Composition Studies in the New Millennium: Rereading the Past, Rewriting the Future*. By Lynn Z. Bloom, Donald A. Daiker, and Edward M. White. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2003. Print (237-251).
- Marback, Richard. "Here and Now, Remediating National Tragedy: and the Purposes for Teaching Writing." Ed. Shane Borrowman. *Trauma and the Teaching of Writing*. Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2005. 53-67. Print.
- McCutcheon, Russell T. *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion*. Albany: State University of New York, 2001. Print.

- \_\_\_\_\_ "Religion, Ire and Dangerous Things." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. 72.1 (2004): 173-193. Oxford University Press. Web. 6 June 2010.
- \_\_\_\_\_ "Myth." *Guide to the Study of Religion*. Ed. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon. London: Continuum, 2009. 190-208. Print.
- McGraw-Hill, ed. *75 Thematic Readings: An Anthology*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003. Print.
- McKibben, Bill. "Driving Global Warming." *The New World Reader: Thinking and Writing about the Global Community*. Ed. Gilbert H. Muller. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007. 459-63. Print.
- \_\_\_\_\_ "The Christian Paradox: How a Faithful Nation Gets Jesus Wrong." *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*. Ed. Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, and Bonnie Lisle. 7th ed. Boston: Bedford of St. Martin's, 2007. 665-76. Print.
- McQuade, Donald, and Christine McQuade, eds. *Seeing & Writing*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000. Print.
- Medved, Michael. "Hollywood Poison Factory." 2000. *Perspectives on Contemporary Issues: Readings across the Disciplines*. Ed. Katherine Anne Ackley. 3rd ed. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College, 2003. 211-16. Print.
- Miller, Richard, and Kurt Spellmeyer, eds. *The New Humanities Reader*. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 2002. Print.

- Montesano, Mark, and Duane Roen. "Religious Faith, Learning and Writing: Challenges in the Classroom." *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom*. Ed. Elizabeth Vander Lei and Bonnie Lenore Kyburz. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, Heinemann, 2005. 84-98. Print.
- Moss, Michael. Personal Interview. 6 Aug. 2011.
- Muller, Gilbert H., ed. *The New World Reader: Thinking and Writing about the Global Community*. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008. Print.
- Muller, Gilbert H., ed. *The McGraw-Hill Reader: Issues across the Disciplines*. 11th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011. Print.
- Murphy, Tim. "Discourse." Braun, Willi, and Russell T. McCutcheon. eds. *Guide to the Study of Religion*. London: Cassell, 2000. 396-408. Print.
- Nobles, Sharon. Personal Interview. 4 Aug. 2011.
- Nystrand, Martin, Stuart Greene, and Jeffrey Wiemelt. 1993. "Where Did Composition Studies Come From? An Intellectual History." *Written Communication* 10 (July): 267-333. Print.
- O'Reilly, Mary Rose. *The Peaceable Classroom*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1993. Print.
- Patterson, David. Personal Interview. 28 July 2011.
- Perry, W.G. *Forms of Ethical and Intelligent Development in the College Years: A Scheme*. San Francisco: Wiley, 1999. Print.

- Perkins, Priscilla. "A Radical Conversion of the Mind: Fundamentalism, Hermeneutics, and the Metanoic Classroom." *College English* 63.5 (2001): 585-611. Print.
- Prothero, Stephen R. *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn't*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007. Print.
- Rand, Lizabeth A. "Enacting Faith: Evangelical Discourse and the Discipline of Composition Studies." *College Composition and Communication* 52.3 (2001): 349-67. J-STOR. National Council of Teachers of English. Web. 25 Jan. 2009.
- Ringer, Jeffrey M. "The Consequences of Integrating Faith in Academic Writing: Casuistic Stretching and Biblical Citation." *College English* 75.3 (2013): 272-98. Web. 21 Mar. 2013.
- Roen, Duane and Mark Montesano. "Religious Faith, Learning, and Writing: Challenges in the Classroom." Vander Lei, Elizabeth, and Bonnie Lenore Kyburz. eds. *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2005. Print. 84-98.
- Rosier, Tamara H. "What I Think I Believe: Using the CHANGE Method to Resolve Cognitive Dissonance." *Encountering Faith in the Classroom: Turning Difficult Discussions into Constructive Engagement*. Ed. Miriam Rosalyn Diamond. Sterling, VA: Stylus Pub., 2008. 77-89. Print.

- Rushdie, Salman. "The Broken Mirror." 1991. *Making Contact: Readings from Home and Abroad*. Ed. Carol J. Verburg. Boston: Bedford, 1997. 53-57. Print.
- The Satanic Verses: A Novel*. United States: Random House, 2008. Print.
- Ruszkiewicz, John. Personal Interview. 16 Feb. 2012.
- Sabine, Gordon A. *Memoir of a Book: The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Expository Prose*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Library, 1993.
- Selzer, Jack, ed. *Conversations: Readings for Writing*. New York: Macmillan, 1994. Print.
- Schaap, James Calvin. "Singing and Preaching: Christians in Writing." *Poets and Writers Magazine* 26 (Jan./Feb. 1998): 18-26.
- Shrodes, Caroline, Harry Finestone, and Michael Francis Shugrue, eds. *The Conscious Reader: Readings past and Present*. New York: Macmillan, 1974. Print.
- Smart, Juanita. "Frankenstein or Jesus Christ? When the Voice of Faith Creates a Monster for the Composition Teacher." *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom*. Ed. Elizabeth Vander Lei and Bonnie Lenore Kuburz. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2005. Print.
- Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. *The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963. Print.



- Sollod, Robert N. "The Hollow Curriculum." Ackley, Katherine Anne, ed. *Perspectives on Contemporary Issues: Readings across the Disciplines*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College, 2000. Print.
- Stone, Lawrence. "Family Values in a Historical Perspective." The Tanner Lectures on Human Values. Delivered at Harvard University, Nov. 16, 17 1994. <<http://www.tannerlectures.utah.edu/lectures/documents/Stone95.pdf>>
- Stubbs, Marcia, and Sylvan Barnet, eds. *The Little, Brown Reader*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1977. Print.
- Stubbs, Marcia. Personal Interview. 23 March 2012.
- Tatom, David. Personal Interview. 3 Aug. 2011.
- Trimbur, John and Robert G. Wood, Ron Strickland, William H. Thelin, William J. Rouster, Toni Mester and Maxine Hairston. "Responses to Maxine Hairston, 'Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing.'" *College Composition and Communication*. 44.2 (May 1993): 248-256. Web. 20 Aug. 2010.
- Vander Lei, Elizabeth. "Coming to Terms with Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom: Introductory Comments." *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom*. Ed. Vander Lei and Bonnie Lenore Kyburz. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton, 2005. 1-10. Print.
- Vander Lei, Elizabeth, and Bonnie Lenore Kyburz. *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton, 2005. Print.

- Vatz, Richard E. "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 6.3 (Summer 1973): 154-161. Penn State University Press. Web. 13 Feb. 2012.
- Verburg, Carol J., ed. *Making Contact: Readings from Home and Abroad*. Boston: Bedford, 1997. Print.
- Warren, Dena. "Philosophy and Religious Disagreements in the College Classroom." *Encountering Faith in the Classroom: Turning Difficult Discussions into Constructive Engagement*. Ed. Miriam Rosalyn Diamond. Sterling, VA: Stylus Pub., 2008. 134-146. Print.
- Williams, Bronwyn T. "The Book and the Truth: Faith, Rhetoric, and Cross-Cultural Communication." Vander Lei, Elizabeth, and Bonnie Lenore Kyburz. eds. *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2005. 105-120. Print.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Taken on Faith: Religion and Identity in Writing Classes." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 48.6 (2005): 514-518. Web. 25 June 2012.
- Wood, Nancy V. *First-Year Writing Perspectives on Argument: A Custom Edition for the University of Texas at Arlington*. Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson, 2009. Print.

### Biographical Information

Myra Lee Salcedo graduated with a Bachelor of Art's degree in Mass Communications/English in 1988, and with a Master of Art's degree in English in 2004, both awarded from the University of Texas of the Permian Basin. Her master's thesis is "Worlds Beyond the Frame: Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Novelists Give Voice to Silent Paintings." Her research interests include the intersections of writing and religion when they occur in the American composition classroom and negotiating those challenges.