Deborah Brandt on Graduate Study in Composition and Rhetoric

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Nancy Linh Karls: I'm Nancy Linh Karls from the Writing Center at the University of Wisconsin Madison, welcoming you to this Writing Center podcast. This podcast series tackles issues of writing in and out of the university. You're about to hear a podcast from our research series which features interviews with outstanding researchers in Writing Center and Rhetoric and Composition Studies.

Brad Hughes: I'm Brad Hughes, Director of the Writing center and Director of Writing Across the Curriculum at the University of Wisconsin. In this brief 4-minute podcast, Professor Deborah Brandt, a noted scholar in the Composition and Rhetoric program in the English Department at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and author of the book Literacy in American Lives, talks about what an exciting time it is to do graduate study in Composition and Rhetoric.

Welcome to the Writing Center's research podcast, Deb.

Deborah Brandt: Thanks for inviting me, Brad.

Brad Hughes: You're widely known as a fabulous mentor for graduate students in the field of composition and rhetoric. What you would you say to a prospective graduate student who's interested in composition and rhetoric? Why would someone want to do graduate work in that field or any advice you would offer?

Deborah Brandt: Well I think many people come in to this field as I did because they've wanted to work on things that really matter to the world. And language, learning language, taking up the role of the writer, we feel that the consequentialness of that. It also was a field when I was getting started in the '80s, that was completely wide open. There were so many questions that had not been addressed and it remains that way today. We still don't have very good understanding of the history of literacy in the United States.

We don't understand the changes that we're going through right now as technologically and in terms of our communication practices. We're living through one of those periods that people are going to be writing about it for a really, really long time.

We like to link our research with our teaching. We like to link our theory with our practice. And this is a field where I think that goes on, and attracts people that care about those things. And so, I think there is every reason in the world to be doing work in composition and rhetoric. And graduate students in this program are encouraging me that this new
generation is just going to be pushing on things. They are much more methodologically multifaceted. They are incorporating the new technological changes more easily into their thinking. They are terrific teachers and I have great hopes for the future of this field.

Brad Hughes: Thanks so much Deb for sharing your research, your teaching and your thoughts about the profession with us. It's really been a treat, talking with you on this podcast.

Deborah Brandt: Likewise Brad, and thanks for making these podcasts available to all of us.

Nancy Linh Karls: Thanks for joining us for this podcast in our research theories. To know more about UW Madison Writing Center, visit our website at wisc.edu/writing. And if you are currently enrolled UW Madison student, you can give us a call at 608-263-1992. We'll schedule an appointment so you can meet with a Writing Center instructor to discuss any feature of writing.

I am Nancy Linh Karls, from UW Madison Writing Center, wishing you happy writing!