



# GENRE PEDAGOGIES FOR THE LIBRARY CLASSROOM: TEACHING SOURCE RHETORICALLY

LOEX 2021

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# COLLEEN DEEL

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- Bemidji is in Northern Minnesota
- I do some teaching, but it isn't my primary role
- This presentation stems from research done during education and composition coursework while getting a MAT

# Agenda

*Today's presentation will be split up into two parts, with pause for Q&A in between*



Rhetorical Genre Theory- What is it? & how does it work in the classroom?



Break for Q & A



Genre Pedagogies!

Teaching Particular Genres

Teaching Genre Awareness

Teaching Genre Critique



Final Q & A

I am doing a research proposal on why crime has escalated in the city of Minneapolis MN and I'm having a hard time finding a good scholarly article on this topic. I see a lot of news reports but I feel most of those are not great scholarly article.



## THE PROBLEM:

Students lack awareness of the academic genres with which they must interact, leading to difficulty using discovery systems and differentiating source types

## THE SOLUTION:

Grounding students into an explicit and critical awareness of the genres of the academy, ensuring active participation and encouraging knowledge creation



Rhetorical Genre Theory  
& Genre Pedagogies

Original Articles

# Genre as social action

Carolyn R. Miller

Pages 151-167 | Published online: 05 Jun 2009

📄 Download citation    🔗 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335638409383686>

📖 References

🗨️ Citations

📊 Metrics

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## Abstract

This essay proposes a conception of genre based on conventionalized social motives which are found in recurrent situation-types. The thesis is that genre must be conceived in terms of rhetorical action rather than substance or form.

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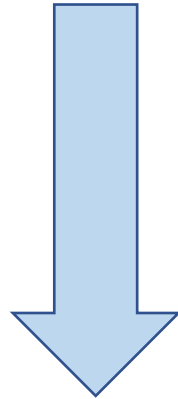
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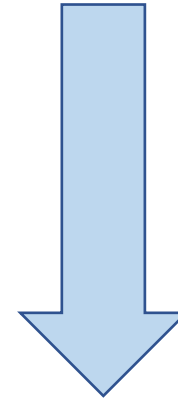
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GENRE AS  
RHETORICAL ACTION



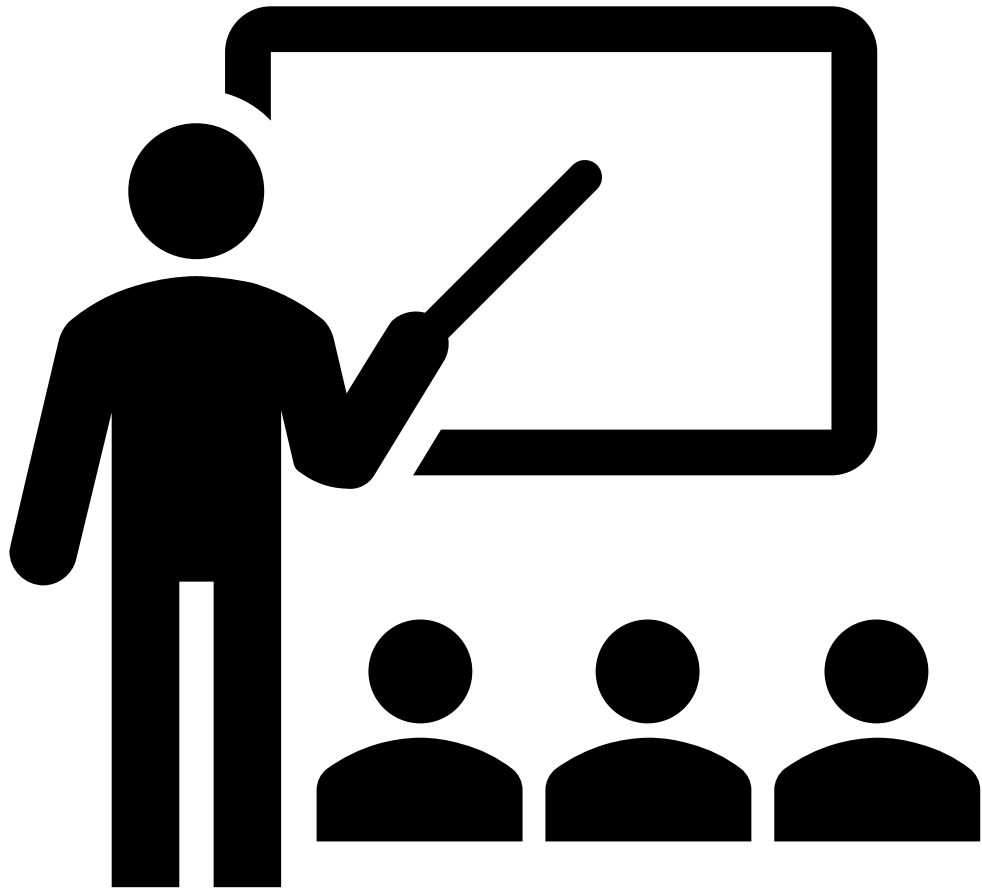
Forms of situated cognition,  
social action,  
and social reproduction  
(Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 60)

GENRE  
IN THE LIBRARY



Genres are formal; they signify a  
material's substance and form for  
organizational purposes





Social situation

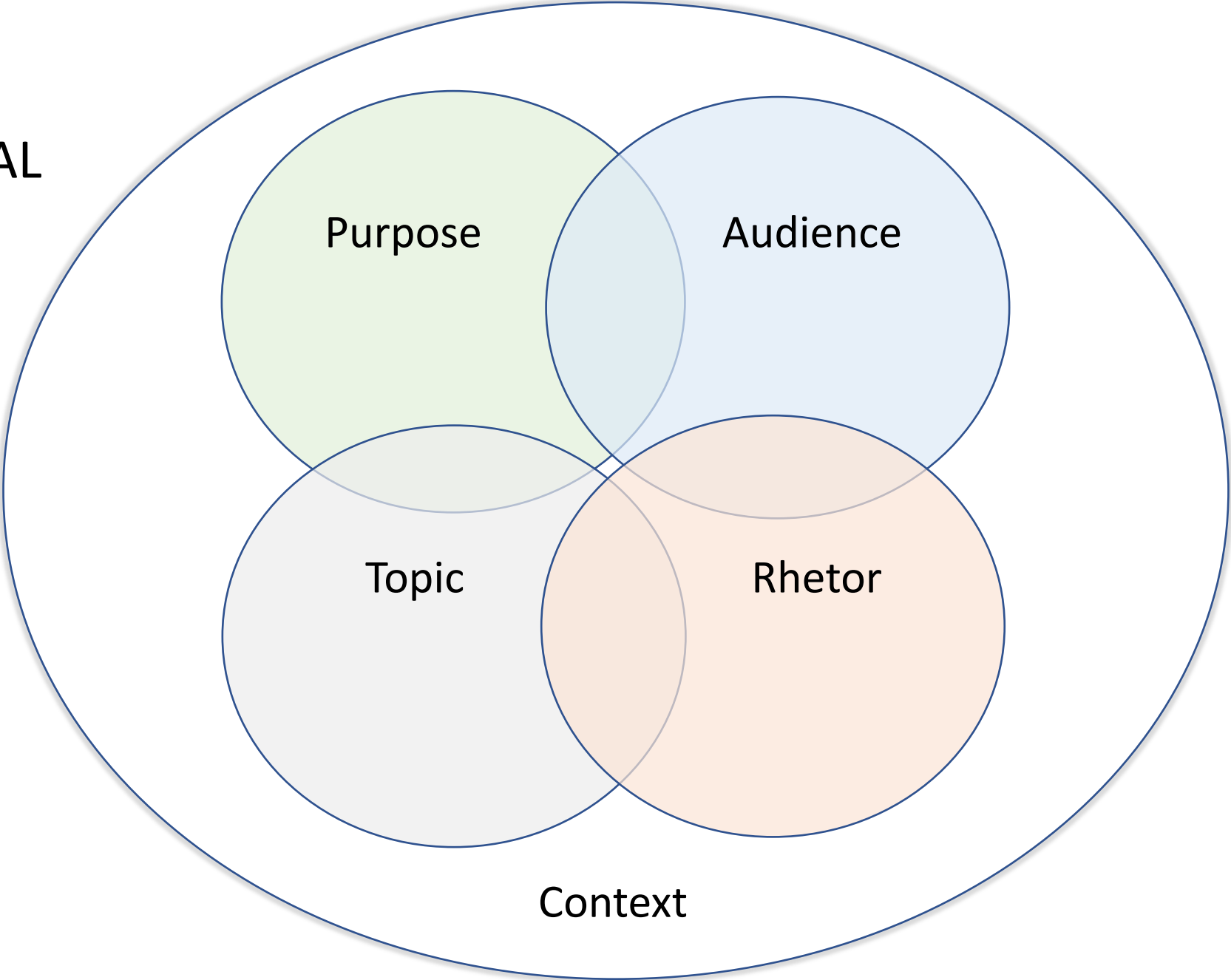
Situated through time & space

Appropriate actions based in context

Lead to expectations and response

**These situated patterns are genres**

OUR  
RHETORICAL  
SITUATION



# JOHN SWALES (1990) “DISCOURSE COMMUNITIES”



An active group



A clear membership



With common goals



Communicates using  
community-exclusive  
language

genre knowledge can either help or hinder  
access to, communication with, and  
participation within different communities



[F]or the student, genres serve as keys to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community.

Carolyn Miller, 1984, p. 165

# AMY DEVITT'S (2014) GENRE PEDAGOGIES

Teaching Particular Genres

Teaching Genre Awareness

Teaching Genre Critique

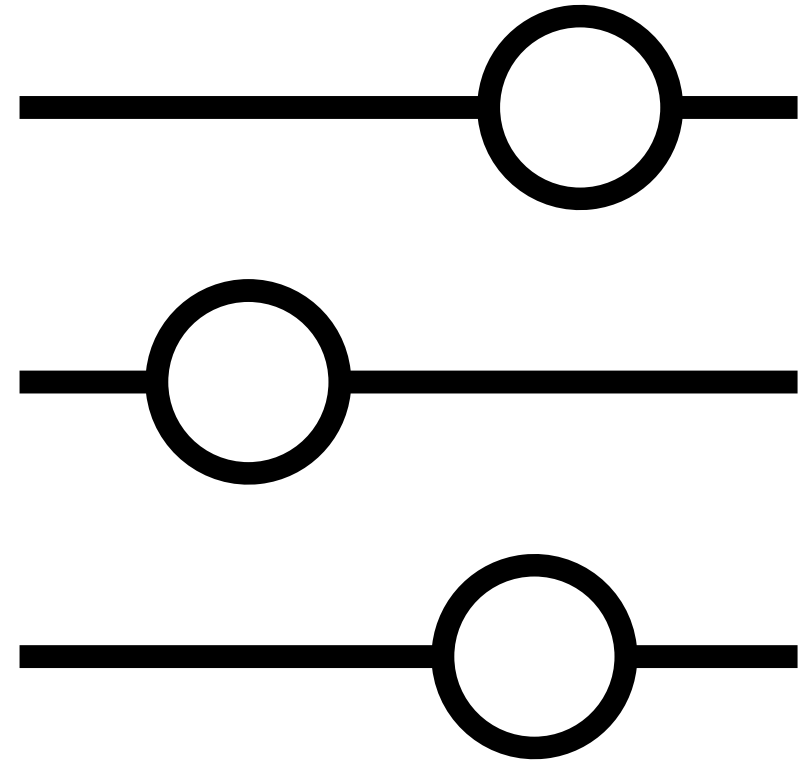
Both fields deal with the teaching of skills rather than content, which makes us stepchildren in the academy while making us innovators in pedagogy. We, more than other fields, attempt to view the academic world from the student's vantage point and try to interpret its peculiar culture in ways that make sense to newcomers. Because of our interdisciplinary nature we teach holistically, attempting to give students a lingua franca to gain entry into the bewildering variety of academic discourse communities.

Barbara Fister, 1992, p. 154

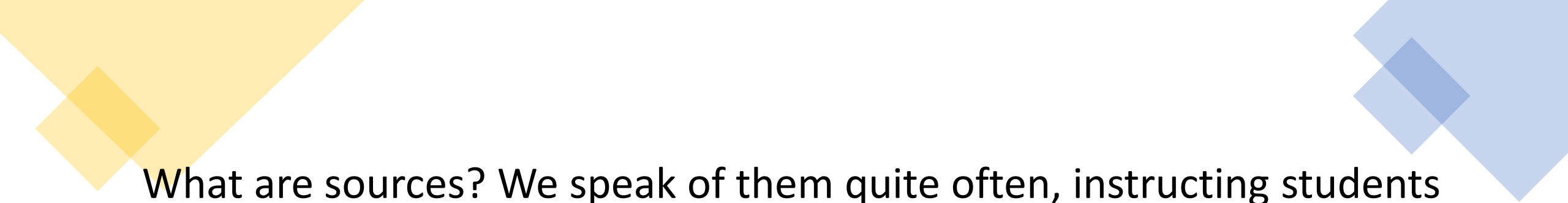
# WHAT ARE THE GENRES OF THE LIBRARY?

Andersen (2009) described 2 levels of “information genres”

1. Materials housed within information systems (e.g., eBooks, journal articles, newspaper articles, etc.)
2. The information systems themselves (e.g., discovery systems, databases, digital archives, etc.)






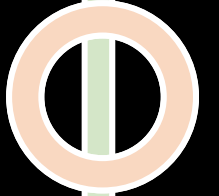


What are sources? We speak of them quite often, instructing students how to locate sources, evaluate sources, select sources, and use sources. We use the term unquestioningly, as if its definition was obvious and its utility proven. But what exactly are they? As a term, it is a generic classification that encompasses an impossibly broad range of material; encompassing countless information types, and formats. There is little indication of the varying quality and content a student may discover. By meaning so much, it means very little. The term describes an idealized version of reality and cannot account for the overwhelming complexity of the information environment; nor can it possibly illuminate the rhetorical nature of sources.

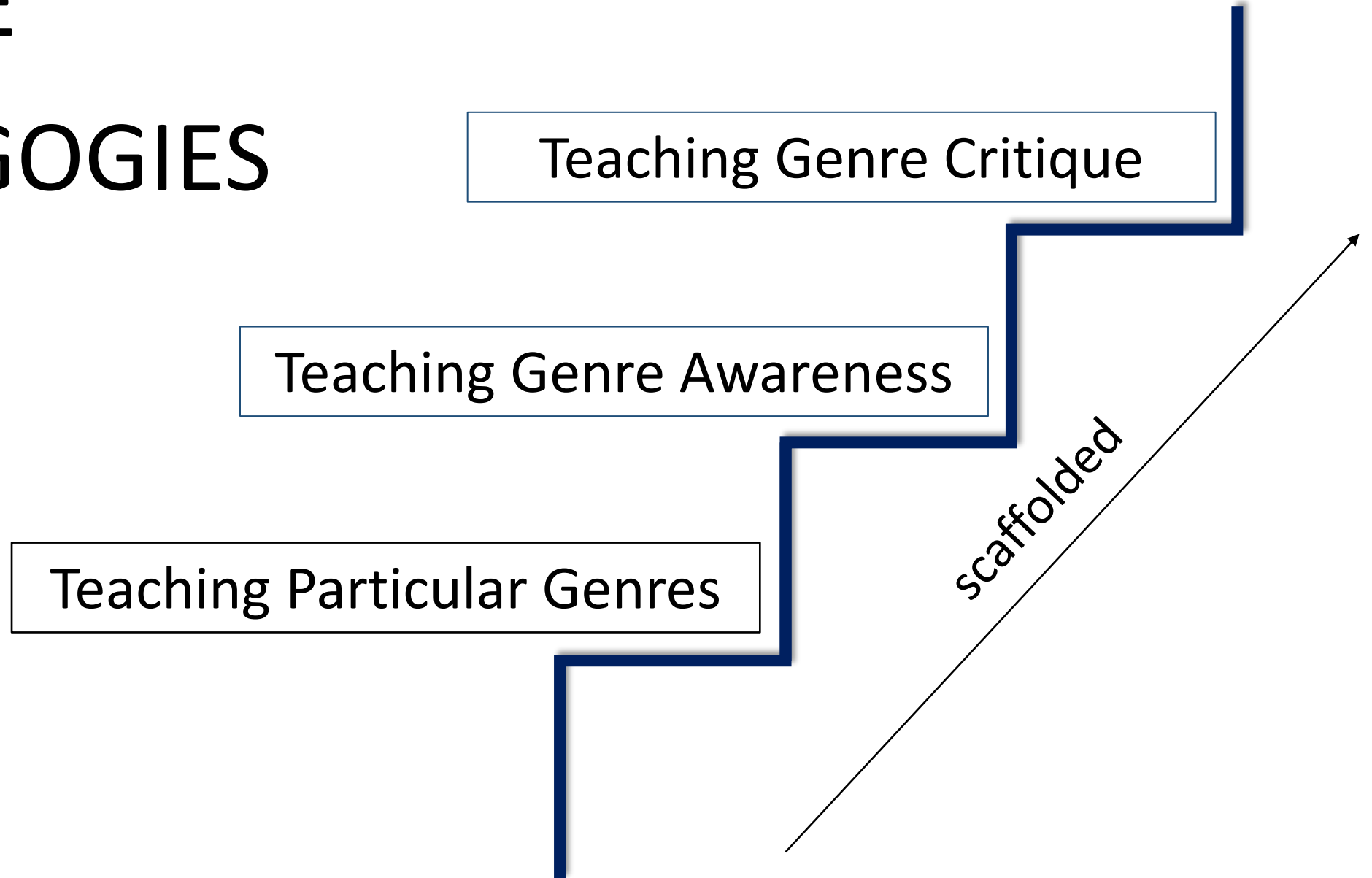
Burkholder, 2010, p. 2



BREAK FOR Q & A



# GENRE PEDAGOGIES



Add your  
own ideas  
here



<https://padlet.com/colleendeel/ypeifunjo60mpje6>

Teaching Genre Critique

Teaching Genre Awareness

Teaching Particular Genres

share your ideas



# TEACHING PARTICULAR GENRES

Gives everyone access to a genre's rules and tricks

Goal = to learn to use a particular genre

**Teach these genre conventions:**

Context, time and place, audience expectations, and strategies for working with the genre.

# TEACHING PARTICULAR GENRES

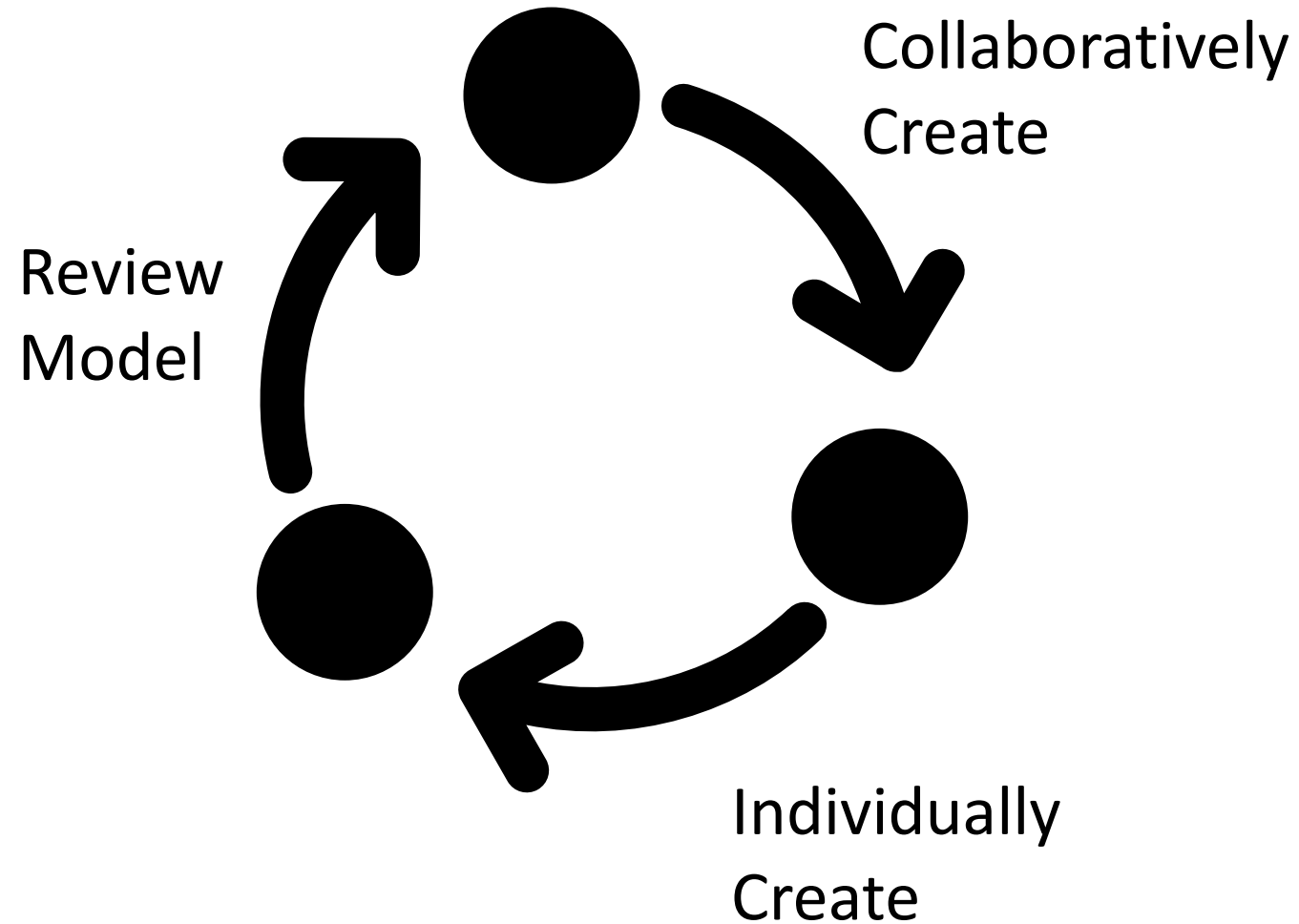
## PROS:

- Particularly useful for those who are completely new to a context (e.g., ESL students)
- Relatively easy to teach
- Can be taught quickly
- A good first step

## CONS:

- Not authentic learning
- Not entirely rhetorically situated
- Students are not provided with the room to question or consider the genres they use
- Method does not provide genre awareness

# Teaching Particular Genres





# TEACHING ACADEMIC SEARCH PREMIER

1. Review the database

2. Reflection:

- Who is this for?
- When should it be used?
- What is contained within?
- How are these records organized?

3. Perform multiple test searches during class

4. Use database outside of class

# Devitt's suggestions to improve your teaching

Complex	remind students that when using the genre outside of the classroom example, the situation will likely be more complex
Examples	give a wide variety of examples
Encourage	encourage use of the genre only when it makes sense
Reflect	leave time for reflection
Critique	name the genre's limitations allowing for critique

Teaching Genre Critique

Teaching Genre Awareness

Teaching Particular Genres

share your ideas

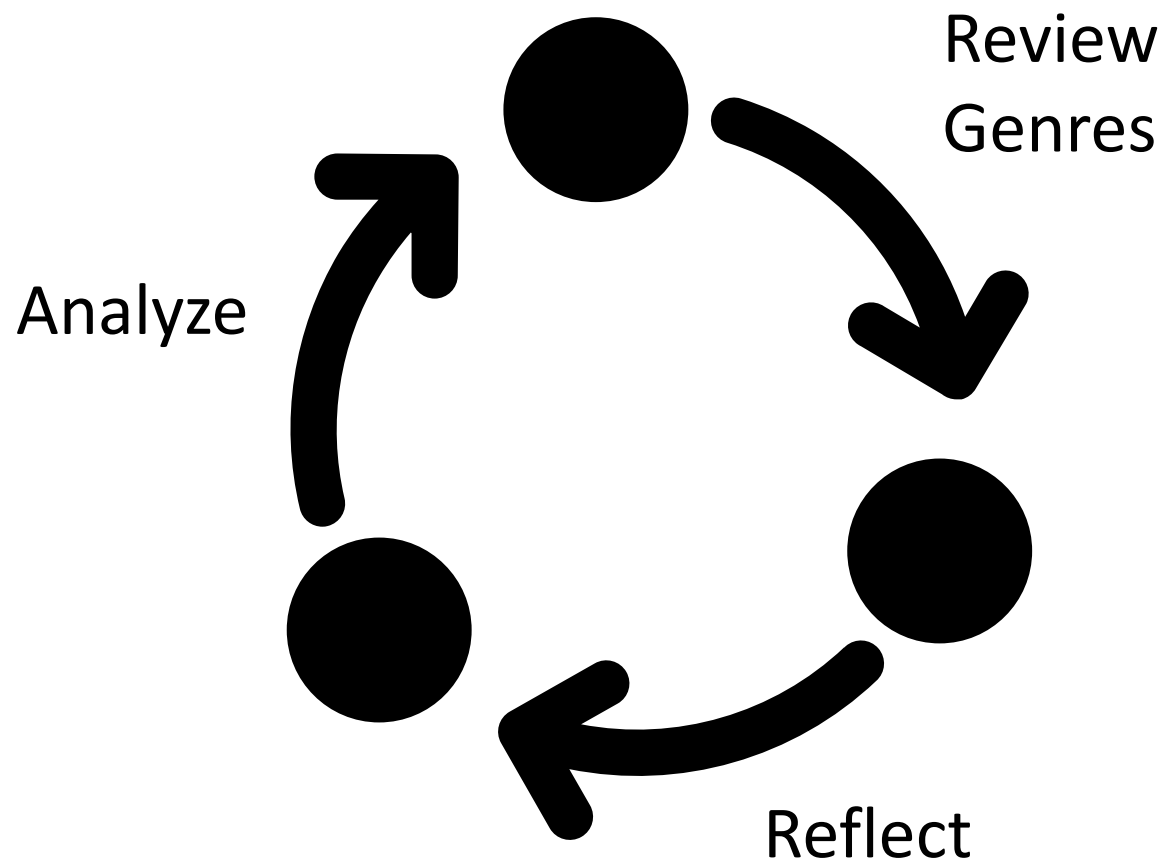


This method encompasses genre's rhetorical nature and “treats genres as meaningful social actions, with formal features as the visible traces of shared perceptions”

Devitt, 2014, p. 152

# Teaching Genre Awareness

Changing the goal from **genre modeling** to **genre analysis**





# Participants

Students can easily situate themselves into the communities they want to join through their awareness

Their community at any given time may be their disciplinary major or any other discourse community



Using Genre in Context

# A GENRE AWARENESS ACTIVITY

Groups review & reflect on different search tools (including genres housed within them)

Groups report on tool's "author", purpose, audience, content

Class discussion on similarities and differences between tools

Finish class with reflection prompt




Teaching Genre Critique

Teaching Genre Awareness

Teaching Particular Genres

share your ideas

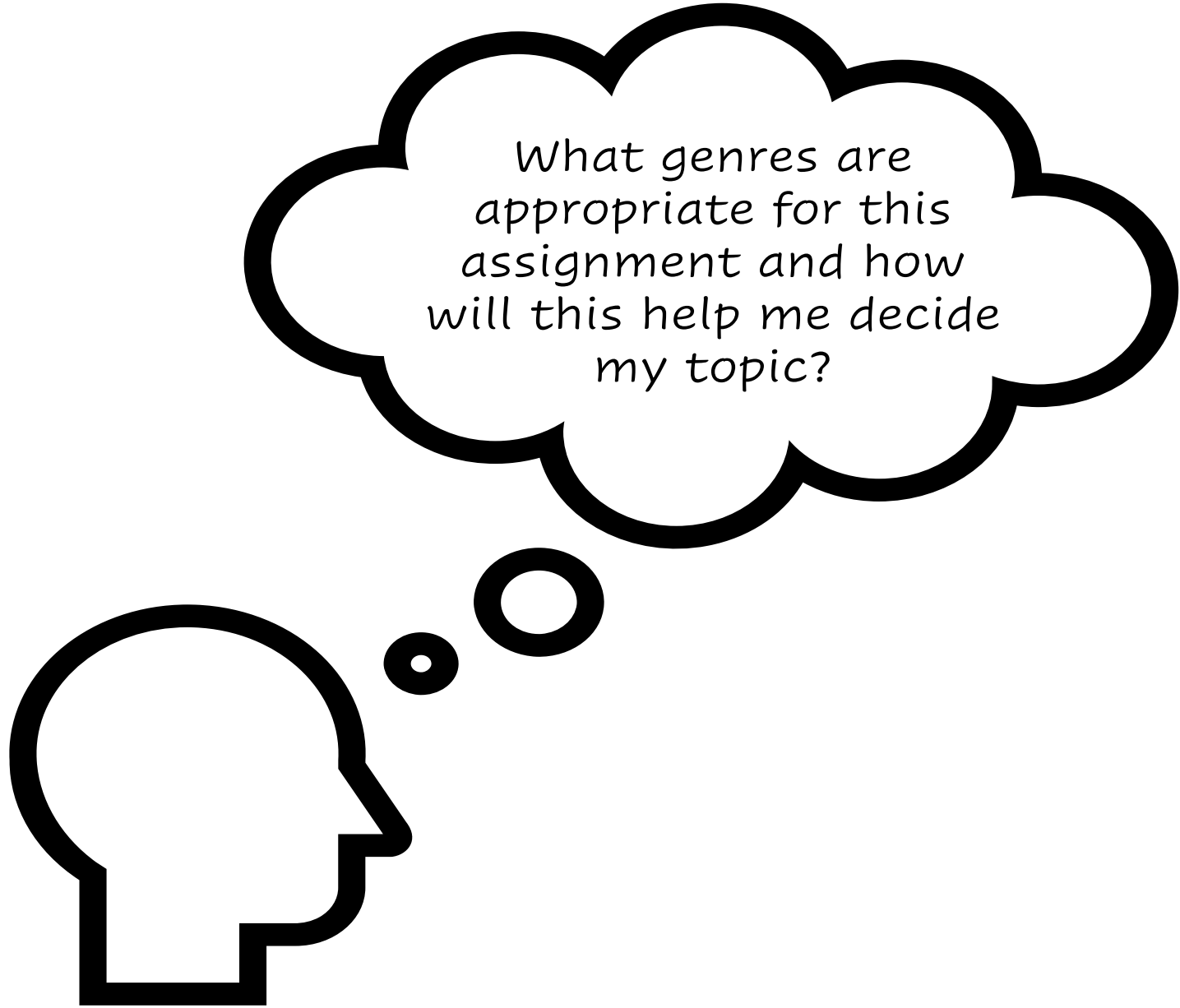




A critical genre awareness pedagogy “opens students to see genres as created by people to achieve aims” rather than natural objects that are neutral or fixed.

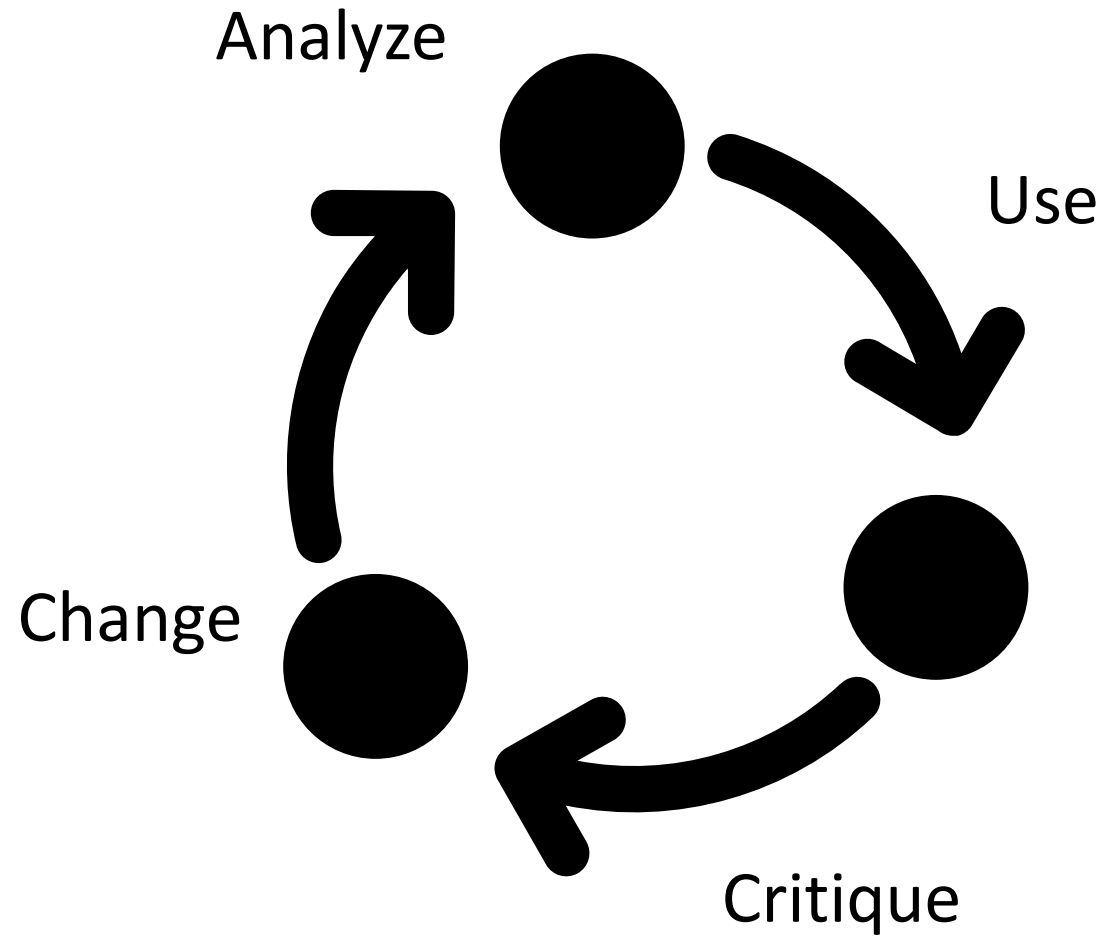
Devitt, 2010, p. 348





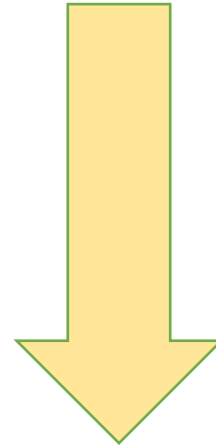
What genres are appropriate for this assignment and how will this help me decide my topic?

# Teaching Genre Critique



“[T]eachers often see the power of genres to inhibit creativity more than the power of genres to reveal constraint”

Amy Devitt, 2010, p. 337



How can revealing the constraints of the database genre improve students' ability to use the resource?

# Critical Meta- rhetorical Questions to Ask Students

(Devitt, 2014. p. 154-55)

What does this genre encourage or constrain?

Who can or cannot use this genre? Does it silence anyone?

Are the genre's effects functional beyond their immediate context?

What values and beliefs are offered through this genre?

Are there political or ethical implications of the rhetorical situation this genre constructs?

## WHAT CAN YOU DO PRACTICALLY?

Use the knowledge of genre as social action to ground your reference, instruction, and other library work.

Recognize the time and effort needed to embed genre awareness into your teaching efforts. Use this to advocate for more time if necessary.

# FINAL Q & A

Thank you!

References:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UI5jj1q0fTw8ScCfpJrf6lzDmpBpCO0T5U66LJclXGw/edit?usp=sharing>

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