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An Existentialist Approach to Teaching Writing: Anguish, Bad Faith, and Seriousness in Composition

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An Existentialist Approach to Teaching Writing: Anguish, Bad Faith, and Seriousness in
Composition

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Dedication

To my parents, Peter Herzog and Christine Herzog

Abstract

This dissertation aims at developing a model concept for the teaching of ethics in the composition classroom through the use of existentialism in the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre. Overall, the gap I am trying to fill with my dissertation is a lack of awareness of how much Sartre actually fits rhetorical theory and composition. Ultimately, this dissertation is the attempt to develop an ethic that is universally applicable in the teaching of composition, without the need for a service learning environment or additional resources outside the university itself. To provide an overview of the project, the approach will be illustrated with three case studies that focus on different ethical issues in writing that are central to first-year composition courses. The first case study looks at a conflict between a professor and a graduate student that involved the discussion of heated topics and power relationships in the classroom. The second case study looks at cases of plagiarism on the highest level, in dissertations. Several German politicians had to resign from their offices because their dissertations contained plagiarized passages, and their reactions sparked controversial responses from both the general public, the media, and academic institutions. The third case study looks at service learning and the encounter with marginalized groups – what could be called the encounter with the Other. Students do not always show an authentic ethical reaction to what they experience. The project will conclude with a discussion of how these cases and Sartre's work might be deployed in the context of a first-year composition syllabus with three main thematic units.

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Introduction

This dissertation aims at developing a model concept for the teaching of ethics in the composition classroom through the use of existentialism in the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre. I first became interested in Sartre after hearing about Emmanuel Levinas and his idea of the Other. At that time, I was vaguely familiar with Sartre's reflective consciousness and found his version of the encounter with others very similar. It led to a paper on Sartre and Levinas and their ethics of identity. As I soon found out, Sartre has not been very popular in the realm of rhetoric and composition. Almost every other French philosopher has his own fan club in rhetoric, to put it in a colloquial way. Sartre is one of the few who does not. Yet after studying his writings and the secondary literature on him more closely, I think that his theories are underutilized in composition, and that his ethics can be used as the foundation for a theoretical class. Overall, the gap I am trying to fill with my dissertation is a lack of awareness of how much Sartre actually fits rhetorical theory and composition. Especially in *What is Literature*, he makes several statements that should appear plausible to any teacher of writing. My case studies will apply Sartre's concept of bad faith to two current events that involved ethical dilemmas and to the popular idea of service learning. The final chapter is a class concept that can be used for a First-Year English writing class at any institution of higher education.

Ultimately, this dissertation is the attempt to develop an ethic that is universally applicable in the teaching of composition, without the need for a service learning environment or additional resources outside the university itself. Through my theoretical foundation and the use of three different case studies, the value of Sartre's existentialist ethical standards will be made clear and put into a modern context, which has not been attempted before in relation to the teaching of writing or First-Year English classes in general.

The Teaching of Ethics and the Relevance of Ethics in Composition

I would like to start with a brief look at the teaching of ethics. This section will look at different ethical standards, different methods of teaching ethics, and different rhetorical ethics. A current article by John Duffy focuses on ethical choices that students make in writing. Duffy mentions the different domains of choices in writing, “such as the rhetorical, the linguistic, or the aesthetic” (Duffy 2017, 229). But he points out that there is another domain: “I am referring to the domain of *ethics* and the *ethical decisions* writers make in the process of composing. Writing involves ethical decisions because every time we write, [...] we propose a relationship with others, our readers” (Duffy 2017, 229, emphasis in original). Duffy summarizes that “if we define arguments as the teaching of claims, proofs, and counterarguments, we are necessarily and inevitably engaged, [...] in practices of ethical deliberation. To make a claim in an argument, for example, is to propose a relationship between others and ourselves” (Duffy 2017, 238). It is this relationship with the other that comes into play in all of my case studies. How do

we respond to plagiarism? How do we react to controversial opinions in the classroom? And how is the encounter with the other an ethical dilemma depending on how it is initiated? We tend to tell students certain standard definitions of what it means to argue ethically, but Duffy also reminds us: “Yet moral ambiguities, as we know, are often the impetus for rhetorical action, and we need rhetoric most when we can discern no rules or certain paths to follow” (Duffy 2017, 240). Existentialism can provide an alternative to what Duffy calls “virtue ethics” (Duffy 2017, 229) in the Aristotelian sense. In *Naming What We Know*, Duffy writes in his brief section on ethical choices: “To say that writing involves ethical choices is not to suggest that individual writers should be judged as ethical or unethical in the sense of being moral, upright, honest, and so forth.” (Duffy 2015, 31). He specifies: “A writer attempting to communicate an idea or persuade an audience, for example, may write in ways that privilege honesty, accuracy, fairness, and accountability. These qualities imply an attitude toward the writer's readers: in this case, attitudes of respectfulness, open-mindedness, goodwill, perhaps humility.” (Duffy 2015, 32) In other words, we should not judge the writer, but the writing in terms of being ethical or unethical. The qualities Duffy mentions can all be associated with writing in good faith. The task of a composition instructor is to provide a pedagogical space where students can productively grapple with ethical choices and respond to them.

In 1980, the Hastings Center published a report, *The Teaching of Ethics in Higher Education*. It contains a central statement that emphasizes the value of teaching ethics across the curriculum:

No one would pretend that a single course in ethics at the undergraduate level,

however solid that course, could hope to cover the subject fully. Hence, one might hope that ideally ethical issues would be broached in many other kinds of courses, at least to some degree. Few areas of human study or exploration lack ethical dimensions. (Hastings Center 28)

The report postulates five purposes of teaching ethics to undergraduates:

- Stimulating the moral imagination
- Recognizing ethical issues
- Developing analytical skills
- Eliciting a sense of moral obligation and personal responsibility
- Tolerating – and resisting – disagreement and ambiguity

(Hastings Center 48-51)

The subjects to teach in order to reach these goals include advanced ethical inquiry, the social and psychological setting of ethical systems and moral behavior, and elements of applied ethics (Hastings Center 52-53). In the same year, in another publication by the same institution (a collection of essays related to the teaching of ethics), Bernard Rosen suggests using metaethics, which he calls “the analysis of the meanings of crucial ethical terms as well as the logic of moral reasoning” (Rosen 174). The key topics he lists are freedom, action, meaning, moral predicates, and justification.

A few years later, Albert Howard Carter III (1983) distinguishes between six different approaches to teach ethics, or, as he prefers to call it, “values.” The first is the *inculcative method*, with a pre-selected number of texts and often tailored to the specific institution where the class is taught. The method is authoritative and may be criticized for this fact, but it has the advantage of clarity and fidelity. The *classical method* emphasizes

the reading of classical texts in the field, often from a broad range of different philosophers. This method is theoretically and historically sound, but may also lead to ivory tower abstraction and a lack of connections to the actual lives of students as well as current social issues. The *experiential method* focuses on a narrow topical experience, such as a specific war, a minority, or the relation between consumers and businesses. This method usually brings the students closer to the topic than a single textbook can, but it may lead to polarization, hasty decisions, and limiting the content to an inculcative approach within the course framework. The *growth-oriented method* was popular in the 1960s and 70s and is a personalized version of the experiential method, more focused on the individual student. Its advantages include a focus on the individual, relevance, and immediacy, but it lacks historical and social breadth as well as intellectual rigor. The *developmental method* is based on Piaget and closely related to the growth-oriented approach. Finally, the *preprofessional method* is not based on general education, but tailored towards a major, for example, Business or Education. The values taught with this method are subdivided by specialty (Carter 12-14). More recently, Deni Elliott (2007) offers four rules related to the teaching of ethics:

- 1) Reasons are necessary for the justified holding of a normative judgment.
- 2) One must be able to articulate one's reasons for holding a normative judgment.
- 3) The production of normative judgment and reason must be the result of the person's own deliberation.
- 4) One must respect and tolerate the views and reasoned judgment of others, even if one disagrees. (Elliott 28-29)

If ethics is mostly concerned with normative judgment, then it would seem useful to look

at a wide variety of situations where normative judgment is at work instead of limiting the class to just one aspect of ethical norms, which is the case for most service learning classes.

Ultimately, ethics is also a matter of ideology. In his essay “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class”, first published in 1988, James Berlin cites Göran Therborn’s three questions in relation to this issue: “What exists? What is good? What is possible?” (Berlin 669). The first question addresses ontology, the second addresses ethics, and the third addresses the limits of expectation. Existentialism tries to answer all three questions. Berlin lists three different types of rhetoric: cognitive rhetoric, expressionistic rhetoric, and social-epistemic rhetoric (Berlin 670-677). He explains: For cognitive rhetoric, the structures of the mind correspond in perfect harmony with the structures of the material world, the mind of the audience, and the units of language. [...] This school has been the strongest proponent of addressing the ‘process’ rather than the ‘product’ of writing in the classroom – although other theories have also supported this position even as they put forward a different process. (Berlin 670)

For expressionistic rhetoric, “the existent is located within the individual subject. While the reality of the material, the social, and the linguistic are never denied, they are considered significant only insofar as they serve the needs of the individual” (Berlin 674). Finally,

for social-epistemic rhetoric, the real is located in a relationship that involves the dialectical interaction of the observer, the discourse community (social group) in which the observer is functioning, and the material conditions of existence.

Knowledge is never found in any one of these but can only be posited as a product

of the dialectic in which all three come together. (Berlin 678)

To summarize: There is more than one way to teach ethical theories, but they all share some core values that are necessary for the peaceful coexistence of human beings both individually and within nation states. The challenge in teaching rhetoric on the college level lies in the selection of the right approach considering class size, student backgrounds, the university's honor code (if there is one), and the university's background (private, public, religious affiliations, etc.).

Next, I will take a closer look at ethics within the field of composition. Starting with Maxine Hairston, the material will cover ethics in the writing classroom, ethics as a universal moral language, ideology, and approaches to ethics through service learning. Ethics was a popular topic in composition studies at the beginning of the 1990s. In her controversial article "Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing" (1992), Hairston deals with ethics and the lack thereof in themed classes, in particular with Marxist or Deconstructionist agendas. She states: "Writing courses, especially required freshman courses, should not be *for* anything or *about* anything other than writing itself, and how one uses it to learn and think and communicate" (Hairston 179, emphasis in the original). She argues against forced multiculturalism and instead opts for leaving students as much freedom to write as possible. Through this approach, multicultural writing is supposed to be the automatic result. Hairston lists three reasons for this:

First, we know that students develop best as writers when they can write about something they care about and want to know more about. [...] Second, we know that young writers develop best as writers when teachers are able to create a low-

risk environment that encourages students to take chances. We also know that novice writers can virtually freeze in the writing classroom when they see it as an extremely high-risk situation. [...] My third objection to injecting prescribed political content into a required freshman course is that such action severely limits freedom of expression for both students and instructors. (Hairston 189)

Through students simply writing about their own experiences, a non-dogmatic classroom agenda, and unforced multiculturalism, Hairston gets her ideal outcome from composition instruction. In her opinion, writing teachers should stay within their area of professional expertise: “helping students to learn to write in order to learn, to explore, to communicate, to gain control over their lives” (Hairston 186).

Christy Friend looks at several approaches to ethics in her essay “Ethics in the Writing Classroom: A Nondistributive Approach” (1994). The first is Iris Marion Young’s *New Ethics*: “The distributive model assumes that human beings are primarily consumers and that justice can be defined as the distribution of societal benefits in equal portions to individuals: ‘social judgments are about what individual persons have, how much they have, and how that amount compares with what other individuals have’ ”(Friend 550). Friend states that C. H. Knoblauch is in line with Hairston when it comes to ideologies in the classroom: “Citing Freire, he argues that asserting moral authority in the classroom replicates the structures of domination critical pedagogy aims to dismantle” (Friend 556). Patricia Bizzell’s idea of rhetorical authority, on the other hand, lies in the tradition of classical rhetoric. Students are allowed to express a wide variety of opinions, but they are required to justify and be responsible for them” (Friend 558). Establishing democratic values in the classroom thus leads to a positive outcome. Friend sees a problem in

relation to rhetoric's original purpose: getting people to agree with one's perspective: "Valuing consensus risks ignoring and silencing those who disagree" (Friend 559).

In "Ethics and Rhetoric: Forging a Moral Language for the English Classroom" (1999), one of his last articles before his death, James Kinneavy lists four features as universal ethical values: "I believe that these four features have major educational implications: a universal respect for life and shock at murder, a global sympathy for families, a worldwide concern for property destruction, and an ubiquitous solicitude for truth" (Kinneavy 8). His referencing of the four principles of a global ethic, developed by the World Parliament of Religions, falls under the exact same categories:

Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life.

Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order.

Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness.

Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women. (Kinneavy 9)

Kinneavy's popular example for the relevance of the four values is Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. He identifies within the play the issues of life, family, property, and truth. Hamlet's father has been murdered (life), his uncle has taken over control of the kingdom (property), the murder was committed by a close relative (family), and he is lying about it (truth). In a similar way, the same principles are dealt with in *Macbeth*. Most students are familiar with these two plays, which are among Shakespeare's most popular works. It is easy for them to notice the ethical implications within the tragedies of the main characters (Kinneavy 18). The advantage of the four universals lies in their widespread acceptance

across different cultures and religions. It does not matter if people are Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, or Jews – and even atheists can agree that these four values enable the peaceful coexistence of human beings. This makes them applicable to any class that deals with ethics.

In an article from the same edited volume as Kinneavy's, Phillip Sipiora defines ethics as follows:

In the English classroom, "ethics" usually signifies the articulation or criticism of patterns, norms, or codes of conduct: the taking of a stand for or against something on the presumptive ground that it is either good or undesirable. Ethics as a formal activity also involves the appraising and, sometimes, revising of behavioral codes. (Sipiora 41)

We are back to ethical behavior as an applied code of conduct. Recently, we have seen examples of former military employees being involved in shootings that were carried out as acts of revenge. These acts of violence against innocent people remind us of the fact that the respect for life and shock at murder Kinneavy mentioned in his essay are very relevant for today's society. Events like these make the headlines and dominate TV news coverage for weeks, and even years later are remembered as black spots in the country's history.

Sipiora thinks that "the writing process is too often an unnatural act" (Sipiora 50). Related to ethics, he explains why: "A critical dimension of this unnatural act is the relationship of the writer (or self) to the 'other'. It is a complicated, tense relationship, with positions and forces of authority and power shifting according to changes in circumstances" (50). He cites Levinas's notion of the other's alterity being the trigger for

ethical reactions and emphasizes the fact that responsible communication depends on an initial act of generosity (51). The problem lies in ethical content often being forced into ideological channels. Sipiora's example from one of his own classes points in a similar direction: One of his students wrote an essay on water problems in Florida and the battle between conservationists and developers. Although his essay was informative and well-written, the student failed to identify the "beliefs, doctrines, and desires that constitute the substructures of his position" (55). As a result, "his ethical stance and ideology – as well that of the 'other' and 'others' – remained static and unexamined" (55). The essay failed because it did not step out of the ideological shadow (environmentalism is always good, commercial development is always bad).

Post-process writing instruction can possibly be seen as the precursor to ethical approaches in First-Year English. In his article "L2-Writing in the Post-Process Era", Dwight Atkinson aims at defining what post-process writing is, reviewing a number of studies that deal with moving beyond process pedagogy, and taking a look at possible further developments in the field.

Post-process writing theory is based on notions of social structures, post-cognitivist ideas, literacy as an ideological arena, and composition as a cultural activity (Atkinson 1532). It resulted in part from the social turn in the social sciences, such as the emergence of areas like ethnomethodology, sociolinguistics, or poststructuralism.

Process writing on the second language level basically saw the writer individualistically, the process of writing as an internal process, and writing as discovery (often self-discovery). Criticism of this approach was based on a lack of awareness of

social conventions which govern writing, and the fact that power relations, society and culture played a more dominant role in writing than most supporters of process pedagogy were aware. Composition as cultural activity refers to cultural differences among writers. Not all systems of teaching and learning are student-centered, process-oriented and fluency-focused. Depending on the type of society, they can as well be teacher-centered, knowledge-oriented and accuracy-focused (1534). These differences make a process-type of writing instruction problematic for L2 learners. Defining the role of the teacher as a facilitator, co-learner or collaborator does not solve the problem of having an authority figure in the classroom. Students might still adapt their writing to the kind of “target product” that they think the teacher expects from them, just writing in a different voice (1535). Another is the type of socialization each student had in his life when he is confronted with process-oriented writing instruction. With a variety of social and cultural backgrounds, there can be problems caused by different responses to the type of instruction. Atkinson cites Mary Kalantzis and Bill Cope raising four questions about post-modernist progressivism:

1. Does it really value all cultural points of view equally?
2. Is a student-centered approach a cultural artifact?
3. Does a cultural bias favor certain groups at the expense of others?
4. Does the assumption that students will discover things for themselves reproduce an unfair, unbalanced system of society? (Atkinson 1536)

Atkinson groups these questions into just three subcategories, namely power relations, cultural mismatches, and techniques and procedures. Power and authority in the classroom is a constant factor that influences the way students see their teachers, and vice

versa. If we look at the three main types of post-secondary education in the United States, we can group them into technical colleges, liberal arts colleges, and big Research 1 institutions (four-year universities with very high research activity). Their profile shapes instruction in the classroom as well. Technical colleges are functionalist, liberal arts colleges can offer a variety of options due to their smaller student numbers and better teacher to student ratio, and Research 1 institutions clearly favor research over teaching. Professors are expected to teach, but their real evaluation is based on their publications and contributions to their fields.

One of the most popular approaches to teaching ethics in the composition classroom involves service learning, which became very popular in the 2000s. It is often implemented from the top down, with the dean or provost mandating some type of service-based learning that sends students into soup kitchens, homeless shelters, retirement homes, or other areas of public service with a need for funding and volunteers. In her 2005 book *Tactics of Hope*, Paula Mathieu describes her different projects and classes in the Boston area. She has often worked with street newspapers and organizations that support the poor and homeless. In her introduction, she references the movie *Candyman*, where two researchers on urban legends in Chicago, after coming to Cabrini Green, first have to convince the locals that they are not members of the police: “We’re not cops, we’re from the university” (Mathieu ix). A big problem with forced community service consists of the clash of cultures and backgrounds. It is one thing if a student already volunteers for a charity and then takes a class that involves community service, but another to send students from wealthy families (a common situation at

Boston University and Boston College) into walks of life they literally know nothing about. Many times, such actions do more damage to a charity than they do good. I also agree with Bruce Herzberg's statement from "Community Service and Critical Teaching" (1994) that service learning can give students the wrong idea of poverty:

Here, perhaps ironically, is a danger: If our students regard social problems as chiefly or only personal, then they will not search beyond the person for a systemic explanation. Why is homelessness a problem? Because, they answer, so many people are homeless. The economy is bad and these individuals lost their jobs. Why are so many people undereducated or illiterate? Because they didn't study in school, just like so-and-so in my fifth-grade class and he dropped out.

(Herzberg 309)

Why should a service learning class change this notion of social problems being mostly personal? Herzberg himself has his doubts about it: "I don't believe that questions about social structures, ideology, and social justice are automatically raised by community service. From my own experience, I am quite sure they are not" (309). While he describes his course design that is aimed at creating a social conscience through service learning and additional readings related to social problems, his closing words are remarkably universal:

Students will not critically question a world that seems natural, inevitable, given; instead, they will strategize about their position within it. Developing a social imagination makes it possible not only to question and analyze the world, but also to imagine transforming it. (Herzberg 317)

Put into context with Mathieu's text, it shows the risks involved in service learning. The

danger lies in utilizing students for a service they would not do out of their own initiative. Even if they glimpse some of the issues at work at their work site, it might still not be enough to achieve the intended course outcome of a service learning class. From my own personal experience, I had nursing majors in my ENGL 102 classes who strictly opposed universal, government-regulated healthcare because it might mean less money to be made by doctors and nurses. Other students openly criticized them for not thinking about their duty to fellow citizens (as nurses), but only worrying about their own fiscal perspective. If this lack of a social conscience exists even in students who intend to work in a field where care and service are supposed to be integral parts of the profession, can we expect students with different plans to fully buy into the concept of service learning?

The concept of the *writing self*, which makes up the writer's identity, is discussed in Chikako Kumamoto's essay "Bakhtin's Others and Writing as Bearing Witness to the Eloquent *I*". This article from 2002 is one of the newer pieces on Bakhtin and related philosophers who developed concepts of writing. Kumamoto states that "the writing self must be reclaimed as a universal complexity of human mind with its capacities for change, abundance, fusion, unity, creativity, and certainty – for all writers [...]" (Kumamoto 69). Her examples involve complex notions of a writer's self and the way this self is constructed:

Because the writer has dialogically harnessed different sources of knowledge in the awareness of her others within, she acquires diverse cultures that she lacks and wishes to complement and expand her self to build a richly expounded base of knowledge, fresh directions, and provocative potentialities. (Kumamoto 75)

If we transfer this notion to a service learning class: How can students find their writing

self if they are forced into an environment that is unfamiliar to them? The point behind Kumamoto's acquisition of diverse cultures is choosing these cultures out of our own free will. Most students who end up in service learning classes by accident do not choose the subject for themselves. It is not just the fact that most students who are privileged enough to attend a major university in Boston (for example) do not really *know* poverty, it is also the fact that they would normally not choose to spend their free time or class time caring for the poor if they had no previous intent to do so. Theoretical instruction in ethics can look at poverty in a classroom setting, with the help of audiovisual material, and even required reading in the area. I find it far more useful to invite a representative from a local charity or non-profit organization into the classroom on campus, where both the students and the instructor have a safe environment not just in terms of pedagogy, but also personal safety. Most American cities become dangerous in the downtown area after dark. People are mugged at gunpoint, cars are hijacked, and drug addicts are out for a fix. This is by no means an exaggerated view. Even Columbia, South Carolina has massive gang-related problems close to campus, in Five Points, a popular shopping and dining quarter during the day and a bar scene with many college crowd-oriented locations at night. A terrible incident involved a student named Martha Childress who got hit by a stray bullet and was paralyzed as a result of her injury:

The incident happened in the 700 block of Harden Street around 2:30 a.m.

A Columbia Police Department incident report states Smith was shooting at two unknown black males he was having an argument with. The bullet missed the intended targets and traveled into a crowd of people waiting for taxi cabs,

according to the report.

Childress was hit in the ribcage and immediately collapsed. She was transported to Palmetto Health Richland Hospital in critical condition. No other injuries were reported. [...] (WIStv.com, Posted: Oct 13, 2013 1:16 PM)

There have been recent shootings and fights on a regular basis. Keeping students safe and respecting their intellectual horizons should be the major goal of a writing class, not a forced social conscience.

John Ruskiewicz, who is one of the few conservative-minded personalities in the world of rhetoric and composition, addresses the subject of ethics in “Advocacy in the Writing Classroom” (2000). I find his closing words particularly powerful:

I fear that the highly sophisticated arguments social rhetoricians sometimes make in defense of writing courses shaped from their personal political beliefs come very close to being rationalizations of control represented as liberation. I only hope such theorists and practitioners are both conscious of and occasionally uneasy with their designs. (Ruskiewicz 33)

Control represented as liberation can be easily related to service learning. The liberating experience (albeit only on the level of a social conscience) is, in reality, a forced participation in service that usually ends as soon as the semester is over.

To sum it up and to establish a connection to Sartre’s notions of ethics, revisiting Sartre in relation to composition studies can offer a new perspective to theoretical works that did not catch on in the field, most of all Hairston’s idea of personal freedom. She was often blamed for providing a romanticized view of students that was no longer true in

today's classrooms. While her rejection of themed classes and politicized content in teaching composition may have been too radical, her idea of freedom (most of all, freedom of choice when it comes to exploring possible topics) is definitely something to work with. I argue against service learning, especially if it is implemented without careful consideration and cooperation between university and charity. Instead, I propose a theoretical foundation of ethics that can be applied to various situations students will encounter in their daily lives. Duffy says that we teach "ethical dispositions" (Duffy 2015, 213), or as he calls it "the communicative practices of honesty, accountability, compassion, intellectual courage, and others" (ibid.). He makes another argument that is in line with existentialist ethics: "I am not suggesting that we teach established moral codes or standards of behavior associated with a particular culture, institution, or religious faith, as I hope will be clear." (Duffy 2015, 213-214) I mentioned before that one of the advantages of existentialism is its atheist perspective regarding the definition of acting in good faith. Duffy reminds us that ethics can be seen as either "a set of norms" (Duffy 2015, 215) or "a basis for creating environments for reflection and moral action" (ibid.). My case studies are concerned with the second definition.

In an article by Leah Zuidema and Jonathan Bush, they talk about what constitutes "good" writing. The problem is that in the realm of professional writing, good writing is usually just seen as effective writing – if the audience reacts the way it is supposed to react, then the writing is good (Zuidema and Bush 95). They are quick to relativize the notion, though, and it is along the lines of Duffy's argumentation: "If we define good writing simply as writing that gets the audience to do or think what the writer wants, we fail to take into consideration the needs or well-being of the audience, and we ignore the

ways in which writing may hurt others or cause harm.” (ibid.) This concept is reflected in their class design, which is similar to what I see as an effective environment to make students think about ethical questions:

Ethical principles won't become 'real' for student writers unless they are faced with practical, concrete situations. To be truly curious about ethics, students need to face problems that aren't easily solved; they need to be puzzled – to face what we might call ethical dilemmas. While it's important that students face real ethical questions, it's also crucial that they have a safe space in which to do this.

(Zuidema and Bush 96)

Students do not need to be sent into dangerous or unfamiliar environments in order to encounter ethical dilemmas. It can be done in the classroom as well.

Existentialist Ethics

This section takes a look at existentialist approaches to ethics, mainly through the critiques of Charles Taylor, Thomas Anderson, Paul Crittenden, and T. Storm Heter. While most of them agree with parts of existentialist ethics, they all disagree with several subordinate aspects that influence the concept as a whole. In Charles Taylor's *The Ethics of Authenticity*, originally published under the title *The Malaises of Modernity*, he identifies three problems with the modern world that are related to ethics. The first is, as he calls it, *individualism*. In his opinion, “modern freedom was won by our breaking loose from older moral horizons” (Taylor 3). The negative consequences of said individualism are a permissive society, a “me-generation,” and the prevalence of

narcissism (4). The second problem is *instrumental reason*. With this, he means “the kind of rationality we draw on when we calculate the most economical application of means to a given end” (5). The third and final one is *soft despotism*. This is not a “tyranny of terror and oppression as in the old days” (9), but a mild and paternalistic government that is still democratic, but runs everything by “an immense tutelary power, over which people will have little control” (9). The three catastrophic results from the three problems are “a loss of meaning, the fading of moral horizons”, “the eclipse of ends, in face of rampant instrumental reason”, and “a loss of freedom” (10). Taylor calls his idea of ethics *authenticity*. Originally, human beings were thought to be “endowed with a moral sense, an intuitive feeling for what is right and wrong” (26). This notion has changed in modern times. Moral belief first developed from a Christian notion of morality (“God, say, or the Idea of the Good”) to a theistic or pantheistic perspective (26-27). A further development is *self-determining freedom*, “the idea that I am free when I decide for myself what concerns me, rather than being shaped by external influences” (27). The most popular version of this kind of freedom is Marxism (28). Taylor does not talk about Sartre specifically, but his book indirectly deals with Sartre’s notion of subjectivism, and for Taylor it only has negative consequences. He fears a loss of community and people lacking the motivation to become politically active for the good of an entire nation.

Thomas Anderson’s *The Foundation and Structure of Sartrean Ethics* (1979) is one of the first books on the topic to be published. He is a groundbreaking scholar to look at Sartre’s idea of values and how they interfere with an ethical standard based on existentialism. Anderson opens his second chapter by citing one of Sartre’s statements about the nonexistence of God:

Every human reality is a passion in that it projects losing itself so as to found being [...] which escapes contingency by being its own foundation, the *Ens causa sui*, which religions call God. [...] But the idea of God is contradictory and we lose ourselves in vain. Man is a useless passion. (Anderson 15, emphasis in the original)

If God does not exist, it is plausible that humans would aspire to become as close to a God-like being as possible. For Anderson, this usually means “amassing wealth, or seeking fame, power, pleasure, virtue, knowledge, etc.” (Anderson 18). Once a person legitimizes him- or herself this way, that person will have earned a *right* to be, and existence will no longer be an accident of chance (even though it still is). A result from this mindset is *seriousness*, which involves taking certain values as always valuable, whether or not they are. For example, honesty or heroism is usually regarded as honorable, regardless of some people denying its value. But according to Sartre, nothing is absolutely valuable, and to say that it is results in bad faith (Anderson 20). A common criticism involves Sartre’s arbitrary selection of ethical dilemmas. His famous example of the French student having to choose between caring for his mother and joining the *résistance* falls into this category. What makes his decision more relevant than a millionaire’s who ponders buying a Ferrari or rather an Aston Martin? For the millionaire, this decision might carry just as much weight as the student’s – values are man-made, after all, so the value of different decisions cannot be measured objectively.

In David Detmer’s book *Freedom as a Value*, published in 1988, Detmer critiques Sartre’s concept of values, in particular ethical subjectivism as opposed to ethical objectivism. The most relevant example is mentioned on page 137, where he cites James

Rachels:

We think that some things *really* are good, and others *really* are bad, in a way that does not depend on how we feel about them. Hitler's concentration camps really were evil, and anyone who thinks otherwise is simply wrong. Therefore we want a theory that will allow for the objectivity of ethics. (Detmer 137, emphasis in the original)

The problem with Sartre's theory lies in the nature of values. If values are only the products of human invention, then they cannot be objectively right or wrong. We can invent whatever we want, and there is no wrong or right invention (Detmer 139). There are arguments for the subjectivity of values, too, though. For example, while grading student writing, we use the same criteria for undergraduates and graduate students, but we do not apply the same standards. While a research paper on Ernest Hemingway written by a student may be good enough for an A in an undergraduate class, it might only receive a C+ in a graduate-level class because the students are held to a higher standard (Detmer 143). These different standards are subjective choices and definitely not objective ethical categories.

Sartre defines values as *demands* and *calls*; they are experienced as something that is not the case, but should be the case (Detmer 144). The subjectivity of values comes into play in the following example: A worker makes \$ 2000 in a month. This salary, by itself, cannot be described as being too high or too low. Only when it is compared with other workers' salaries, there is a perception of how adequate it is. This assignment of value is a subjective act and dependent on consciousness. In a similar manner, only if the salary is *perceived* as being too low will it motivate the worker to a course of action, such

as going on strike (Detmer 145). Detmer also uses baseball as an argument for objective ethics, but the example works with football as well. Let us assume an NFL team has just won the Super Bowl and several contracts of players will expire after the season. Within the financial limits of the organization, it must be the goal of every general manager to re-sign the important players first (starters, Pro-Bowl players, team leaders in certain categories, etc.). This is an issue that even outsiders can understand. Even a person who knows nothing about football can agree that Peyton Manning is a better quarterback than Brandon Weeden, for example, and more important to the success of his team than some backup running back who also could be re-signed. In this case, the measurement of values is *not* subjective – values can be measured by statistics and performance in general (Detmer 146). Values themselves are subjective, but their measurement through criteria is not.

Another problem lies in the notion of bad faith. By definition, bad faith is an ethics that is ashamed of itself and does not own up to its actions. Detmer uses the example of the “authentic torturer” (Detmer 165) to show that bad actions do not necessarily result in bad faith. What if the torturer says “I have freely chosen to kidnap and torture you, and I take full responsibility for my actions”? The torturer is authentic in his choice to torture a victim. We can regard his actions as morally wrong, but as long as he is aware that they are morally wrong, he does not act in bad faith. Linda Bell simply calls this *cynicism* (Bell 33). In her words, “if one is aware of what one is doing, then one could hardly succeed in what one is trying to do – namely, deceive oneself” (33). As such, cynicism is an unsuccessful attempt at lying to oneself. It is still an example of bad faith, but it is incomplete bad faith. Ultimately, as Detmer states, “Sartre’s theory is unable to

find even the most minimal of criteria for distinguishing the greater or lesser moral worth of different human actions” (Detmer 167). This is because any choice or preference is as justified as any other; all are equally groundless. Why, then, should freedom as the highest possible value and centerpiece of almost all of Sartre’s writings, be any different? Bell has several answers to this question. The biggest problem is that Sartre never managed to finish or publish a work on ethics, which he originally announced in *Being and Nothingness*. He was working on it for most of his life, but either he was waiting for the world’s circumstances to change so they would fit his theories or he was continually adapting his theories to fit the events in the world (Bell 177). As Sartre says in *Saint Genet*: “Any ethic is both impossible and necessary” (Bell 180). An attempt at a comprehensive ethical theory will always fall short in certain areas that the ethics fails to explain. Sartre at least succeeded in defining bad faith and the act of lying to oneself; also, mankind’s desire to make itself God is undeniable if we look at genetic engineering, for example. While it has obvious benefits, it can be called “playing God.” Humans assume the role of a creator. The world’s first cloned sheep, Dolly, fits the concept as well. Ultimately, mankind wants to create something that could not be created before. Unlike most people who look at Sartre’s ethics, Bell stands firm in her belief that it is still relevant: “I maintain that Sartre offers a way of affirming universalizability in moral judgments without either adopting a Kantian view of human reason or importing an unsupportable ‘absolute’ value (such as consistency) into his ethics” (Bell 176).

In his newer work *Sartre’s Two Ethics*, Anderson divides Sartre’s ethical theories into three phases: The first ethics is contained within *Being and Nothingness*, the second ethics consists of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and the writings after that book

(including several public lectures in the 1960s), and the third ethics, with the working title *Power and Freedom*, is only mentioned in interviews recorded shortly before Sartre's death and might never become published (Anderson 1993, 1-2).

Crittenden talks about Sartre's ethics specifically several times in his book *Sartre in Search of an Ethics*. He defines Sartre's goal in the *Notebooks for an Ethics* as follows:

Clearly, what he is seeking is an account of ethics as a branch of practical philosophy concerned with how to live well in relation to others and in society as a whole. Ethics in this sense is an element of political science, as in Aristotle's philosophy (though this is not a connection to which Sartre adverts). At the same time, he is concerned with a theory of ethics, that is, he wants to arrive at a considered account of the nature, foundation, and authority of ethics. (Crittenden 17)

We can see that Sartre's ethics is mostly concerned with the nature of the state (he was a supporter of Socialist ideas, but he was also convinced that Socialism was not being done right in the world and had failed because of wrong concepts) and interaction between people. As far as the topic of ethics being both impossible and necessary is concerned, Crittenden provides his own commentary:

For the present time, the world being as it is, the prospect is that ethics is both absurd (impossible) yet necessary. Sartre's response in this situation is to be critical of an optimism that considers ethics the natural human disposition and the ethical attitude as always possible; on the other hand, he is concerned not to fall into the pessimism that sees ethics as perfectly impossible. (Crittenden 20)

Human beings are clearly not "naturally ethical". But they are also not completely

incapable of acting ethically. Sartre provides an outline of his “Plan for an ontological ethics” in the *Notebooks*. I will only list the main categories of section one here:

- 1) Existence as a choice of being and a lack of being
- 2) In particular, that *alienation* that is the social aspect of reification
- 3) Freedom as alienated
- 4) The categories of all forms of Alienation
- 5) Description of the world of alienation
- 6) Freedom in alienation
- 7) Conversion: nonaccessory reflection
- 8) The appeal to others
- 9) Signification of the realm of ethics

(Sartre *Notebooks*, 468-471)

Section two has only three parts:

- 1) Alienation as original sin
- 2) Nature of history
- 3) Man’s role in history

(Sartre *Notebooks*, 471)

Under “Man’s role in history”, we find an important definition: “Real (concrete) ethics: to prepare the realm of ends through a revolutionary, finite, creative politics. Conversely: that the realm of ends lies precisely in the preparation for the realm of ends” (Sartre *Notebooks*, 471). As Crittenden explains,

The conflict-ridden world of *Being and Nothingness* has to be read *historically*, he now insists, as depicting an original fallen nature and hence as constituting ‘an

ontology before conversion'. The original fault, which marks a perpetual beginning for humanity, consists in alienation and inauthenticity in a flight from freedom into bad faith, oppressive relations, and the appropriative desire for being. Radical conversion to authenticity would be the turning from this negative condition to inter-subjectivity in the recognition of mutual freedom and responsibility in a society of equals free of oppression. (Crittenden 27-28)

Being and Nothingness laid the ground work for Sartre's ethics, but it is, as its subtitle says, a "phenomenological essay on ontology." Sartre gives an outlook on what was supposed to follow this ontology at the end of the book:

Ontology itself cannot formulate ethical precepts. It is concerned solely with what is, and we cannot possibly derive imperatives from ontology's indicatives. It does, however, allow us to catch a glimpse of what sort of ethics will assume its responsibilities when confronted with a *human reality in situation*. Ontology has revealed to us, in fact, the origin and the nature of value; we have seen that value is the *lack* in relation to which the for-itself determines its being as a *lack*. (Sartre *Being*, 795)

Human reality in this situation is precisely what Sartre's future work on ethics set out to examine, but it did not result in a finished product. Crittenden sums up Sartre's ethics in very compact form:

What Sartre espouses, in a word, is an ethics of generosity sustained by the pure choice of the individual moral agent (linked with others in the common recognition of the freedom of each). In summary, this might take the form: assume your freedom and the freedom of others, take responsibility, always act

generously. (Crittenden 33)

As far as Sartre's ethics can be related to rhetoric, another one of his ideas makes sense: "It is necessary to choose Evil in order to find Good" (Bell 180). Rhetoric often operates within a gray area where actions are not always viewed as honorable. But if they lead to a positive outcome, their use is necessary, though not always justified. It is undeniable that human beings have the freedom to choose their actions. Of course there are societal, cultural, and personal restrictions, among many others – but even these restrictions can theoretically be ignored, sometimes with serious consequences. While it may not be possible to classify freedom as a value, we can definitely say that it either exists or does not exist. Sartre defines his idea of freedom in *Existentialism is a Humanism*:

When I affirm that freedom, under any concrete circumstance, can have no other aim than itself, and once a man realizes, in his state of abandonment, that it is he who imposes values, he can will but one thing: freedom as the foundation of all values. [...] We will freedom for freedom's sake through our individual circumstances. And in thus willing freedom, we discover that it depends entirely on the freedom of others, and that the freedom of others depends on our own.

(Sartre *Existentialism*, 48)

Freedom as an interpersonal and reciprocal concept is the foundation of values, even if it is not a value in itself. It is only possible to define values if one has the freedom to do so.

Heter is mostly concerned with the notion of freedom in *Being and Nothingness*.

The specific theories that he applies will be talked about in detail in chapter one.

Ultimately, Heter defines freedom as "non-coercion" (Heter 19).

To sum up, Sartre's ethics is mostly an ethics of values, and it defines human

interaction based on the principles that were established in *Being and Nothingness* (although the work itself does not provide an ethics *per se*). My case studies for the dissertation all involve different values and their interpretations. As such, Sartre's ethics is suitable as an ethical foundation for their analysis.

Sartre in the Composition Classroom

My approach to harness Sartre's ethics for the teaching of composition (especially in First-Year English) mostly utilizes his notion of good faith. Because service learning is one of the predominant methods to introduce students to ethics in writing classes, my initial thoughts on the subject involve a different notion of service learning. Very often, service classes are implemented from the top down, initiated by a dean or the university president, and all classes have to work with a limited number of local charities. I call a forced social conscience through service bad faith. The students will go to work at a homeless shelter, in a soup kitchen, or at a retirement home, but they will do it not out of their own initiative, but because they have to do it. It is bad faith because it is not the product of making a decision (which would involve anguish), but a forced labor activity in an area the students might not even be interested in. Good faith would be leaving it up to the students to decide where they want to work, and it would involve making a decision and weighing alternatives. This means that students would first require an introductory class on ethics and classroom visits by different representatives of local charities. Not every student is willing to work in a dangerous area of town, especially at night. In my opinion, animal shelters or food banks are good alternatives to soup kitchens

and homeless shelters if students have concerns about them. In the ideal case, a service learning class would consist of students who are already volunteering for charities or who are involved in charitable activities through their church or other similar institutions. The class in ethics can build a strong foundation, and the following service learning class can streamline the students' efforts into a more polished writing product (for example, a paper about their experiences and how it transformed their views of poverty) than a class that asks them to write about poverty right away, before any formal instruction about the topic. Sartre comments on this notion of making a decision in his 1980 interviews (BL = Benny Lévy, J-PS = Jean-Paul Sartre):

BL: What do you mean today by "ethics"?

J-PS: By "ethics" I mean that every consciousness, no matter whose, has a dimension that I didn't study in my philosophical works and that few people have studied, for that matter: the dimension of obligation.

"Obligation" is a poor word, but to find a better term you would almost have to invent one. By obligation I mean that at every moment that I am conscious of anything or do anything, there exists a kind of requisition that goes beyond the real and results in the fact that the action I want to perform includes a kind of inner constraint, which is a dimension of my consciousness. Every consciousness must do what it does, not because what it does is necessarily worthwhile, but, quite to the contrary, because any objective that consciousness has presents itself as something in the nature of a requisition, and for me that is the beginning of ethics. (Sartre and Lévy 69-70)

Webster's defines *requisition* as "the act of formally requiring or calling upon someone to perform an action" (Merriam-Webster's 11th edition). If we think of this action as service for a charity, students might indeed feel that inner constraint Sartre is talking about, but they may have to ignore it or abandon it because they are forced to participate in whatever service activity the class requires. This is unethical according to Sartre's terms. He further illustrates his concept:

J-PS: Today I think everything that takes place for a consciousness at any given moment is necessarily linked to, and often is even engendered by, the presence of another—or even momentarily by the absence of that other—but, in all events, by the existence of another. To put it differently, each consciousness seems to me now simultaneously to constitute itself as a consciousness and, at the same time, as the consciousness of the other and for the other. It is this reality—the self considering itself as a self for the other, having a relationship with the other—that I call ethical conscience. (Sartre and Lévy 71)

This is an extension of reflective consciousness and it can easily be transferred to service learning, too. Service learning is a valid and authentic approach to encounter "the other" through service and leaving one's own comfort zone, but it cannot be required against someone's will. That would lead to a distorted view of the other that does not have an open and generous conscience towards him or her. According to Heter, freedom is non-coercion. A service learning class that requires students to do things they would not do out of their own initiative can be seen as an example for coercion, though.

Paolo Freire comments on "false generosity" in Chapter 1 of *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed. This passage is closely related to service learning:

Any attempt to “soften” the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity; indeed, the attempt never goes beyond this. [...] An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this “generosity,” which is nourished by death, despair, and poverty. That is why the dispensers of false generosity become desperate at the slightest threat to its source. (Freire 44)

False generosity can be seen in the attempts to manage the problem of homelessness in big American cities (or in big cities around the world, as a matter of fact). The authorities are willing to build and maintain homeless shelters, but this is mostly done to keep the homeless off the street and give them a place where they can sleep at night. Homeless people are often seen as an unwelcome sight to tourists, and they might give visitors an unintended impression of the city. Of course this is false generosity. In the city of Columbia, South Carolina, the newest homeless shelter was built a “safe distance” away from the downtown area. An article from *The State* newspaper shows the officials’ attitude towards homeless people:

“The culture of enabling is ending,” said city Councilman Cameron Runyan, who is the architect of the shelter plan that has brought Columbia often unflattering national media coverage in which some charged that council was evicting the homeless from the city center. “We are helping them by walking beside them to help with a path forward,” Runyan said. “We’re not looking to warehouse people.” (www.thestate.com)

This represents false generosity because the major objective is removing homeless people from the downtown area. They will still be living at a shelter somewhere else, so the statement of “not looking to warehouse people” is not true. Runyan does not say how the city is going to help homeless people with a “path forward”.

Freire also defines what he calls *true generosity*:

True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the “rejects of life,” to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands— whether of individuals or entire peoples—need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work, and, working, transform the world. (Freire 45)

It is easy to see what Freire prefers over false charity. Instead of finding solutions to manage homelessness, the better approach is to fight the causes of homelessness and to make sure less people become homeless in the first place. As working members of society, they contribute far more to the human world than as unemployed recipients of welfare. But true charity also means that those who “fight to destroy the causes” must have a sincere desire to do so: “This lesson and this apprenticeship must come, however, from the oppressed themselves and from those who are truly solidary with them” (Freire 45). We have to ask ourselves if the majority of students in service learning classes are “truly solidary” with the people they are supposed to help. This also pertains to true solidarity to the respective charity that is involved. If the students are neither solidary to their cause nor to their charity, we can call their work false charity; or, in Sartre’s terms, bad faith.

If we look at the act of writing in relation to Sartre's works, his book *What is Literature* is often overlooked these days, even though some scholars clearly place it in the rhetorical tradition, such as James Kastely, who writes:

Sartre's concern for community and for the relation of the writer to the community places him in the rhetorical tradition which assumes that a community is to some degree indeterminate and, consequently, in need of being reconstituted. The rhetor addresses this indeterminacy through a discourse that attempts to close a situation by bringing an audience to deliberate upon the alternatives offered by the rhetor and then to make a choice among them. (Kastely 1989)

Bringing an audience to deliberate upon alternatives is a dimension of rhetoric. Sartre clearly separates the prose writer from the poet:

It is true that the prosewriter and the poet both write. But there is nothing in common between these two acts of writing except the movement of the hand which traces the letters. Otherwise, their universes are incommunicable, and what is good for one is not good for the other. Prose is, in essence, utilitarian. I would readily define the prose-writer as a man who *makes use* of words. (Sartre *Literature*, 13)

The prose writer can stand for the rhetor here. Students also write in prose, if they are not in a rare creative writing poetry class. Sartre even relates writing to speaking: "The writer is a speaker; he designates, demonstrates, orders, refuses, interpolates, begs, insults, persuades, insinuates" (Sartre *Literature*, 13-14). These functions of writing as speaking are all parts of rhetoric. Sartre views human reality as a "revealer" (32), and he states that "man is the means by which things are manifested" (32). Writing gives shape to ideas,

concepts, and notions. It is up to the reader to identify and interpret them, though. For Sartre, “all literary work is an appeal” (40). It is an appeal to the reader, and without the reader, the appeal does not achieve its intended effect. Consequently, “reading is an exercise in generosity, and what the writer requires of the reader is not the application of an abstract freedom but the gift of his whole person, with his passions, his prepossessions, his sympathies, his sexual temperament, and his scale of values” (45). Generosity is one of the central terms in Sartre’s ethics. Always acting generously is part of acting in good faith. As we have seen, true generosity is also an important term in Freire’s pedagogy. What Freire calls the “Banking Concept of Education” and its negative consequences are still being taught in First-Year English classes all over the United States. Why should we leave out another important contributor to the idea of generosity, Jean-Paul Sartre? His thoughts on writing are also an important contribution to the field of composition, but rarely looked at these days. Putting Sartre and Freire into a dialogue with each other can only benefit the instruction in the composition classroom.

If we look at post-process composition pedagogy in the 1970s and 80s, where the teacher was seen as a nurturing and enabling resource, the current approach has shifted to fostering diversity in a directive way through the encounter with the other. The teacher is still a part of the classroom, though – no matter how far in the background he or she tries to be, the elementary call to action (in the form of writing) is still initiated by the teacher. James Berlin is a post-process pedagogue, but much less so than Freire. His approach is less radical. In the first chapter of *Rhetoric and Reality*, he starts his overview with the statement that “literacy has always and everywhere been the center of the educational experience” (Berlin 1) Learning to read, write and speak in the officially sanctioned

manner has thus made rhetoric (as the production of spoken and written texts) and poetic (as the interpretation of texts) the foundation of schooling (Berlin 1). The chapter is concerned with different types of rhetoric over time, always reflecting popular notions within the language sciences in the way that rhetoric is understood and taught. Rhetoric is a diverse discipline that has included a variety of incompatible systems (Berlin 3).

Ultimately, it is a question of epistemology – what is the nature of knowledge and the person who has knowledge? A rhetorical system is based on assumptions about reality, interlocutor (the writer or speaker), audience, and language. How each of these elements is defined depends on ideologies within a society. Competing rhetorics are always related to competing ideologies (Berlin 4-5). In turn, the curriculum is influenced by economic, social and political conditions – and college writing courses change with these conditions.

Berlin distinguishes three epistemological categories of rhetoric: the objective, the subjective, and the transactional. Objective theories assert that the real is located in the material world and ask the writer to record this reality so it can be reproduced by the reader. This concept is prevalent in current-traditional rhetoric (CTR). It assumes that truth exists prior to language and can be discovered through induction. CTR teaches the modes of discourse, emphasizing exposition and its forms (analysis, classification, cause and effect, etc.). Behaviorist, semanticist, and linguistic rhetorics also fall under the objective category. They deal with conditioned response in writing behaviour (behaviorist), distortions in communication (semanticist), and structure of language (linguistic). Subjective theories are founded on Plato's ideals of rhetoric – truth can be known, but not shared or communicated. It must be discovered by the individual in a private act (Berlin 12). Consequently, a teacher cannot communicate truth – he can only

provide an environment in which the students can discover the truth on their own (Berlin 13). Modern methods of subjective rhetoric are journals, writing to learn, and peer review activities.

Transactional theories see truth as arising out of the elements of the rhetorical situation – subject, object, audience and language. The three major forms of this approach are the classical, the cognitive, and the epistemic. The classical views truth as a construct of the discourse community – it is open to debate. The cognitive approach assumes a correspondence between the structures of the mind and the structures of nature. Epistemic rhetoric sees language as implicated in all human behavior – truth emerges out of an interaction between the material, the social, and the personal (Berlin 17).

To provide an overview of the project, the approach will be illustrated with three case studies that focus on different ethical issues in writing that are central to first-year composition courses. The first case study looks at a conflict between a professor and a graduate student that involved the discussion of heated topics and power relationships in the classroom. The second case study looks at cases of plagiarism on the highest level, in dissertations. Several German politicians had to resign from their offices because their dissertations contained plagiarized passages, and their reactions sparked controversial responses from both the general public, the media, and academic institutions. The third case study looks at service learning and the encounter with marginalized groups – what could be called the encounter with the Other. Students do not always show an authentic ethical reaction to what they experience. The project will conclude with a discussion of how these cases and Sartre's work might be deployed in the context of a first-year composition syllabus with three main thematic units.

Chapter 1: Seriousness and Conflict at Marquette University

This case provides a site for exploring how Sartre's ethical thoughts on seriousness and values being entirely man-made are useful for understanding confrontations over classroom interaction and reactions from third parties outside of the classroom. More precisely, the case illustrates conflicts over values and politics that happen in settings where there are clear power differentials among the participants. As John Duffy states, we make ethical choices when we write. We also make ethical choices when we engage in classroom discourse. Writing and oral communication are integral parts of public life and subject to ethical standards. The writing classroom aims at not just teaching students how to write effectively, but also how to write ethically. The same concept applies to oral discussion and argumentation. When students craft arguments about issues of public importance, they open themselves up to criticism. Teachers become vulnerable when the way they run a class is examined more closely.

I would like to contextualize the classroom according to Marie-Louise Pratt. In her lecture "Arts of the Contact Zone", she defines the academic community as a contact zone as follows: "The idea of the contact zone is intended in part to contrast with ideas of community that underlie much of the thinking about language, communication, and culture that gets done in the academy" (Pratt 493).

The classroom is a space where different cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, religious beliefs and national origins clash and mingle. And there are many other factors that Pratt does not even mention. We think of the classroom as a safe space, but as we all know, there is no space that is absolutely safe. When conflicts arise and solutions need to be found, we are often reminded that the power differential in the academy is not much different from the one in a corporation or multi-national organization. The case at hand shows that no matter what happens, those who are on the lower steps of the ladder have a hard time fighting people who are higher up. Even if both parties end up losing, it is a fight that should not have been fought in the first place. Pratt explains that “In keeping with autonomous, fraternal models of community, analyses of language use commonly assume that principles of cooperation and shared understanding are normally in effect” (Pratt 494). Teachers and students are expected to work with each other, not against each other. Many times, the opposite is the case. “Them against us” was the reason why we have unions and labor movements. Many southern universities do not allow unionization, and the south is generally suspicious of workers' movements that could threaten the supremacy of the leading elite. While this may sound like a call to action in the vein of Marx, it is not. The problem lies in the fact that universities in the United States are run more as businesses than as institutions of learning. When a university's president or provost has a yearly salary of several hundred thousand dollars while graduate students, adjunct faculty, and even instructors and lecturers at the same institution barely make a living while working full time, something is wrong. The academy ceased to be a “brotherhood” a long time ago, and not just in the United States. German universities, to name just one European example, operate under the same principles now. Professors are

no longer civil servants appointed for life (or rather, until official retirement), but salaried employees with benefits who no longer have the freedom that the traditional concept of tenure once granted them. Degrees have been streamlined and modeled more according to the competition both in Europe and the rest of the world. I myself witnessed the struggles of my alma mater's student government against a tuition fee of just 500 Euros per semester – a minute amount compared to tuition in the U.S., but indicative of giving up the old concept of a university that is funded by taxes and free to everyone who possesses the educational requisites to attend it. This is the site of conflicts between administration and students as well as employees in the lower ranks. But what happens when there is conflict in the classroom? Pratt asks the question:

What is the place of unsolicited oppositional discourse, parody, resistance, critique in the imagined classroom community? Are teachers supposed to feel that their teaching has been most successful when they have eliminated such things and unified the social world, probably in their own image? Who wins when we do that? Who loses? (Pratt 495)

Opposition is not always a bad thing. And frankly, if all students had to always agree with the instructor, we could as well call us drill sergeants instead of teachers. “Yes, sir” or “Yes, ma'am” should not be our preferred responses to a task. “Why?” is a much better one.

Freedom and Seriousness in Contact Zones

Pratt's essay has been influential in the discussion of power relations in the

classroom. For example, Richard Miller refers to Pratt in his article “Fault Lines in the Contact Zone.” He offers a good description of the teacher's role:

In the uncharted realms of teaching in the contact zone, the teacher's traditional claim to authority is thus constantly undermined and reconfigured which, in turn, enables the real work of learning how to negotiate and to place oneself in dialogue with different ways of knowing to commence. (Miller 407)

Most of Miller's article deals with responding to problematic or even disturbing student writing. The classroom is a contact zone for the teacher as well – how does an instructor respond to uncomfortable encounters with student writing?

Joseph Harris in turn responds to both Pratt and Miller (in “Negotiating the Contact Zone”) and points out limitations in the contact zone model. He thinks that “if we want, that is, to work with students who voice beliefs that are not so much 'oppositional' as they are simply opposed to our own – then we need first to find ways of keeping them an active part of the conversation of the class” (Harris 37).

Overall, scholars generally focus on the collision between cultures and backgrounds as well as expectations and reality in student writing. Some students openly try to provoke the instructor with their writing, while others submit material that may be correct in content, but is completely against conventions of style and format. A different type of contact zone is the one between people on different levels of a power differential in a hierarchy – and not just between instructor and students.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre talks about value: “Value is given as a beyond of the acts confronted, as the limit, for example, of the infinite progression of noble acts. Value is beyond being” (Sartre *Being*, 144). Values are a final state of affairs – once

things are the way they are supposed to be from an ethical perspective, value is achieved. Sartre thinks that human beings create their notion of value: “These considerations suffice to make us admit that human reality is that by which value arrives in the world. [...] Since value is always and everywhere the beyond of all surpassings, it can be considered as the unconditioned unity of all surpassings of being” (Sartre *Being*, 144). Value is also “a lack”, in a sense that the absence of values creates an empty space: “In all cases of lack, value is ‘the lacked’; it is not ‘the lacking’ “ (Sartre *Being*, 144). It is not the condition of something missing, it is the thing that is missing itself which points to value. Earlier in the book, he talks about lack in relation to the human condition: “It is only in the human world that there can be lacks” (Sartre *Being*, 135). This can be compared to one of the basic principles of economics: Human beings have needs, and needs are unlimited. These needs are the result of a lack. Animals do not perceive a lack except for their most basic needs – they feed, they reproduce, but they are content with their situation. Sartre elaborates:

Human reality by which lack appears in the world must be itself a lack. For lack can come into being only through lack; the in-itself can not be the occasion of lack in the in-itself. In other words, in order for being to be lacking or lacked, it is necessary that a being make itself its own lack; only a being which lacks can surpass being towards the lacked. (Sartre *Being*, 136)

It is this improvement towards the lacked, or, in other words, the filling of a void or an absence, that symbolizes Sartre’s concept of values. Let us assume a person has been lying and perceives his or her lack of honesty as a lack. By becoming honest and not lying anymore, that person fills the perceived lack. The creation of values is a result of

transcendence of the human condition. Composition instruction responds to a lack as well – first and foremost a lack of training in academic writing on the side of the students, but also often a lack of awareness what ethical argumentation really is. We also fill a void when we engage in argumentation – one of Bitzer’s definitions of exigence is “an imperfection marked by urgency” (Bitzer 6). Rhetoric responds to this imperfection (or lack!) through the means of language.

In *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Sartre talks about the influence of personal feelings on moral decisions:

In other words, feelings are developed through the actions we take; therefore I cannot use them as guidelines for action. This means that I shouldn’t seek within myself some authentic state that will compel me to act, any more than I can expect any morality to provide the concepts that will enable me to act. (Sartre *Existentialism*, 32-33)

As a result, the standard by which moral actions can be measured only relates to good faith and bad faith. If an ethic is ashamed of itself and does not dare to speak its name openly, it is bad faith. On the other hand, an ethic that is openly available to be judged if it abides by moral standards is good faith. For example, many people are called homophobic if they reject the idea of same-sex marriage on the grounds of religious beliefs. A person can approve of homosexuality in every other way except for marriage, but this one limitation is often seen to classify that person as a homophobe. If this person engages into a conversation about his or her religious beliefs and why they cause this person to be against same-sex marriage, the person still acts in good faith. This person’s ethic is presented to others and thus available to be examined. In their writing, students

often respond to controversies as well. Ultimately, a student's choice may come down to patch write or not to patch write – will the student properly cite sources and only use the ones that are listed, or copy and paste as he or she sees fit? Ethical choices also involve respecting opposing viewpoints and dissent. Rhetoric may be mostly about persuasion if we focus it on Aristotle, but as soon as Quintilian and Cicero come into the discussion, it is also about using the means of language to do good and to have high morals and character.

Another concept from Sartre's philosophy is seriousness, which he describes in *Being and Nothingness*. It is at work on both sides of the conflict described in this case study, especially in terms of the inability to reach a compromise, and Sartre defines it as follows:

The spirit of seriousness has two characteristics: it considers values as transcendent givens independent of human subjectivity, and it transfers the quality of “desirable” from the ontological structure of things to their simple material constitution. For the spirit of seriousness, for example, bread is desirable because it is necessary to live (a value written in an intelligible heaven) and because bread is nourishing. The result of the serious attitude, which as we know rules the world, is to cause the symbolic values of things to be drunk in by their empirical idiosyncrasy as ink by a blotter; it puts forward the opacity of the desired object and posits it in itself as a desirable irreducible. (Sartre *Being*, 796)

The chain of correlations here involves bread being nourishing, thus bread being necessary to live, hence bread being desirable. Of course, many other types of food are

nourishing as well, and a human being would be able to live without eating bread at all as long as all nutritional needs were met by other food groups. As John Valentine writes about seriousness, it is a result of being for-itself, the being after consciousness makes people aware of being:

The results of the serious attitude are thus found in common axiological attributions when the good, the beautiful, the right, etc., are created by a for-itself that is in denial about its very activity of value-generating choices. The world is mistakenly appropriated by consciousness in the serious attitude as an ensemble of transcendent values, and the for-itself is continuously in bad faith to the extent that it adopts the attitude of seriousness. (Valentine 396)

The most important aspect involves seriousness as an indicator of bad faith. Interestingly, even if an attitude of seriousness leads to positive effects, the fact that it does not involve anguish results in bad faith. Considering values as not being absolute and weighing different options with uneasiness before making a decision would fit the definition of anguish.

Sartre defines being in-itself as follows:

An existent cannot be stripped of its being; being is the ever present foundation of the existent; it is everywhere in it and nowhere. [...] The meaning of the being of the existent in so far as it reveals itself to consciousness is the phenomenon of being. This meaning has itself a being, based on which it manifests itself. (Sartre *Being*, 24-25)

Being in-itself applies to both objects and living beings, such as humans or animals. The difference is that lifeless objects only have a being in-itself. They do not have a for-itself

because they do not have a consciousness. This is related to what Sartre refers to as “presence to self” (Sartre *Being*, 119). A longer passage explains the movement from being in-itself to being for-itself:

In fact the self cannot be apprehended as a real existent; the subject can not be self, for coincidence with self, as we have seen, causes the self to disappear. But neither can it not be itself since the self is an indication of the subject himself. The self therefore represents an ideal distance within the immanence of the subject in relation to himself, a way of not being his own coincidence, of escaping identity while positing it as unity – in short, of being in a perpetually unstable equilibrium between identity as absolute cohesion without a trace of diversity and unity as a synthesis of multiplicity. This is what we shall call presence to itself. The law of being of the for-itself, as the ontological foundation of consciousness, is to be itself in the form of presence to itself. (Sartre *Being*, 123-124)

This means that presence to itself is the manifestation of an object to another consciousness. The self is not its own coincidence in the way that it has a presence which establishes identity. Sartre’s example is simple: “The for-itself is, in the manner of an event, in the sense in which I can say that Philip II has been, that my friend Pierre is or exists” (Sartre *Being*, 127). Being for-itself is being in the consciousness of others. Thus, seriousness assigns values to different states of being for-itself that can manifest themselves in a variety of ways. Neither of these values is absolute and universal because all of them are manufactured by the human consciousness.

Danielle LaSusa writes about seriousness that “the serious attitude turns values into objects, in the sense that it understands values as inert, transcendent, givens – written

in some immutable heaven” (LaSusa 29). This is in line with Heter’s statement that religious morality is a common form of seriousness. If we view a school’s honor code in this light, however, it is in most cases also a form of seriousness. Certain values are seen as universal and desirable and are thus canonized and set in place as guidelines. This is not a negative action, but from a neutral standpoint it also turns values into objects and views certain values as universally acceptable. LaSusa also talks about the relationship between seriousness and bad faith:

Bad faith takes advantage of the ambiguity of human existence as both facticity – that is, as thrown into a particular situation in the material and social world – and as a transcendence – as free to interpret and evaluate this world. Rather than accepting both components of my existence, in bad faith I treat the things of the material world as transcendent values, and then I treat myself as a thing that must submit to this value. (LaSusa 31)

In *Sartre’s Ethics of Engagement*, Heter says that seriousness has two common forms: “Two egregious forms of seriousness in ethics would be religious morality and Platonism. On both accounts, knowing the right thing to do consists in discovering timeless, mind-independent standards of conduct” (Heter 145). Heter suggest the term “mutual recognition” when it comes to interpersonal ethics:

Mutual recognition would be seen as the paramount ethical good. But recognition need not be a monolithic goal. A range of diverse ethical goods could be interpreted as concrete forms of recognition. Goods would be interpreted as relations, not things. Importantly, values would be seen as collective and institutional not individual. Values would be as plural (to paraphrase Aristotle) as

the social practices of human communities. There would be as many values as there are concrete forms of recognition (family goods, civil-social goods, political goods). (Heter 146)

While this theory makes sense, seeing values as only collective rather than individual creates some problems, too. To use a current example, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has just allowed all of its member churches to perform same-sex marriages in their sanctuaries, involving their pastors in the ceremonies. The “Social Statement on Human Sexuality” contains the following passage:

The ELCA recognizes that it has a pastoral responsibility to all children of God. This includes a pastoral responsibility to those who are same-gender in their orientation and to those who are seeking counsel about their sexual self-understanding. All are encouraged to avail themselves of the means of grace and pastoral care. (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 19)

But it is up to each individual church to decide if they want to do that or not. From entire congregations voting against it to just individual pastors deciding not to officiate same-sex marriages even though the individual church allows it, there are several versions of how the ELCA’s policy can be ratified by a church. If values were indeed collective, the ELCA would have simply mandated all of its member churches to perform same-sex marriage ceremonies from now on. Instead, the governing body of the organization realized that there are liberal and conservative congregations among its members, even though the ELCA is already the most liberal Lutheran denomination in the United States. I am using this example to illustrate Sartre's concept of values a bit further. In some of my classes, when students wrote about the topic of same-sex marriage and presented their

final papers, occasionally other students asked them if they had used the Bible as a reference at all. Most of them did not. The Old Testament has statements against homosexuality; the New Testament does not. Students usually gave the answer that same-sex marriage is a legal issue and concerns equal tax benefits and social acceptance in a way heterosexual marriages have had them for centuries. The Bible does not legally prevent any married couple from filing for divorce, even though there are several statements against divorce in the Bible. Why would same-sex marriage be any different?

Freedom is another important concept within existentialism. In *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Sartre describes his idea of freedom:

We will freedom for freedom's sake through our individual circumstances. And in thus willing freedom, we discover that it depends entirely on the freedom of others, and that the freedom of others depends on our own. Of course, freedom as the definition of man does not depend on others, but as soon as there is commitment, I am obliged to will the freedom of others at the same time as I will my own. I cannot set my own freedom as a goal without setting the freedom of others as a goal. (Sartre *Existentialism*, 48-49)

This is an easy way of defining the concept in general. Originally, freedom within the possible means of a human being is unlimited, but as soon as other people are involved, a person's own freedom depends on the freedom of others. If a person demands religious freedom, for example, it is ethically wrong to grant religious freedom to just this one person. Every member of a respective society must also be granted religious freedom. George Kerner further comments on this aspect by saying that "freedom is not to have

unlimited options, but to will to choose among the options you do have. Being free is therefore believing, believing in, and taking advantage of, your freedom” (Kerner 161). Touching on the philosophical component, human beings alone are thought to have free will, so utilizing their freedom to make decisions within their possible means is one of the main characteristics of a human being’s consciousness.

Freedom as an interpersonal and reciprocal concept is the foundation of values, even if it is not a value in itself. It is only possible to define values if one has the freedom to do so. We come back to Heter regarding the limits of personal freedom in Sartre’s model (as discussed in the introduction). Heter is mostly concerned with the notion of freedom in *Being and Nothingness*, which he sums up in four main categories: “past decisions do not limit a person’s freedom or cause a person’s current actions” (Heter 9), “brute nature does not limit a person’s freedom” (9), “other people do not limit my freedom” (9), and finally “social and historical circumstances do not limit my freedom” (10). He goes on to identify the flaws in all four statements. Past decisions only have no influence on freedom if projects are not continuous. There are continuous projects, however, such as finishing a book or going on a diet (11). Brute nature does have an influence on our lives if we consider need. We need to eat if we want to stay alive, for example. If we choose life over death, then brute nature does in fact limit our freedom (11). The claim that other people do not limit our freedom does not address coercion, which, for Sartre, does not exist. Heter’s example involves a rape victim who can either choose to give up her body or be killed by the rapist. Just because the victim has a choice, it does not imply that the situation does not involve coercion. Neither choice is a positive one. Although Sartre would argue that the victim would freely choose to either be raped or killed, it is a terrible

justification for the supposed absence of coercion (13). Finally, Heter disproves the claim that historical circumstances do not limit our freedom. His example is that of a slave born in Virginia in 1800. Historical conditions do indeed limit that person's freedom because the slave would have no authorship of his own actions. Sartre's option that the slave could assume his enslavement and become a "happy slave" is wrong because slavery can never be liberating, and it is the alienation of agency (15). Ultimately, Heter defines freedom as "non-coercion" (19). If we go back to the question of freedom – Sartre states that the freedom of others depends on our own. In a classroom, all voices should be allowed to be heard. If there is opposition or dissent, the students are allowed to say so. Instructors should be aware that students even respond to readings very differently. Part of being a teacher is being able to handle criticism. Early composition studies was very much focused on practical application of techniques in the classroom – and what works for one teacher may be completely useless for another one. The teacher has authority in the classroom, but this authority mostly covers enforcing policies and assigning grades. No instructor has the right to force his or her political or religious views on students, and some teachers decide to leave them out of the classroom discussion entirely.

The Conflict at Marquette

In November of 2014, news appeared about a classroom occurrence at Marquette University, first reported by *Inside Higher Ed*. In an ethics class earlier that year, Cheryl Abbate, a graduate teaching assistant for philosophy, discussed the philosopher John Rawls and his equal liberty principle (Flaherty). According to the principle, "every person

has a right to as many basic liberties as possible, as long as they don't conflict with those of others" (Flaherty). In response to Abbate's question for examples that violate the principle, such as seat belt laws and laws against the trade of people's organs, a student remarked that a gay marriage ban was also a violation (Flaherty). But "Abbate quickly moved on to the next topic, as there were more nuanced examples to discuss" (Flaherty). Another student approached Abbate after class to express his frustration about her not considering the example of gay marriage because "he had seen data that children of gay parents 'do a lot worse in life,' and that the topic merited more conversation" (Flaherty). Abbate pointed out that gay marriage and adoption were separate topics, that the study the student referred to had been widely discredited, and that homophobic comments would not be tolerated in her class. The student was convinced his comments were not homophobic. As it turned out, he had been recording their conversation with his cell phone (Flaherty). There was also a notion that Abbate had told the student to drop the class if he disagreed with gay marriage. The student did drop the class, but because he had an F at midterm and not because he was upset with Abbate's response to the incident.

There were no immediate reactions or results from the conversation until John McAdams, an associate professor of political science at Marquette, wrote about it in his blog called "Marquette Warrior". He accused Abbate of "using a tactic typical among liberals now" (Flaherty) and stated that she was trying to "shut up" the student (Flaherty). McAdams was in fact the advisor for the student, a piece of information which was initially omitted from the discussion.

Cheryl Abbate posted a series of responses on her own blog, which now has a

permanent tab called “Recent Controversy”:

Q1: Did I tell a student to drop my class if he disagreed with gay marriage?

A: No. This is a lie that can be traced back to a Fox News opinion piece that has subsequently been parroted by websites with similar agendas. Note that this quote has never been reported as being on the student’s tape recording. I did, however, remind a student of his right to drop my class if he felt he could not abide by my safe-space policy (which is in accordance with Marquette University’s Harassment Policy). (Abbate)

This comment deals with the accusation of her telling the student to drop the class. She only reminded the student that he could drop the class if he disagreed with her classroom policy. Another response involves the classroom discussion itself:

Q3: Did I tell my class that “everyone agrees with gay marriage” so there is no reason to discuss it?

A: No. This false claim can be traced back to the original blog post of Associate Professor John McAdams (who was not in the classroom to hear what I said and does not have a tape recording of the class lecture itself). For one, I am well aware that not everyone agrees with gay marriage. But more importantly, the class discussion was not about the public’s opinion of gay marriage. Rather, the

discussion concerned how a particular philosophical principle (John Rawls's Equal Liberty Principle) might be applied to various contemporary social issues, such as the criminalization of drugs, seat belt laws, or a ban on gay marriage. (Abbate)

This comment backs up Abbate's claim that gay marriage was only a side note in the discussion and far from being a potentially controversial topic. The discussion developed a negative dynamic because the student thought his comments on gay marriage had been cut short, when in reality it was never intended to be discussed in more detail. The topic was a philosophical concept of equal liberty and how it could be applied to various situations, not the public opinion about gay marriage.

The *Daily Nous* published a series of articles about the controversy. The main problem was McAdams' open criticism on the internet and his publicizing Abbate's name, which subjected her to a substantial amount of criticism from the political right, but also led to a flood of hateful and insulting e-mails, some of them threatening. As it was later revealed by Marquette's College of Arts and Sciences Dean Richard Holz, it had not been the first time that McAdams had publicly criticized students and even colleagues in his blog. As a consequence, the university decided to terminate McAdams' employment. The dean's letter to McAdams about the termination proceedings was published on the *Daily Nous*. The most important part addresses McAdams conduct and the use of his blog for his personal agenda. To summarize, the Dean stated that McAdams was not being an example of academic integrity and encouraging senior faculty member,

but instead furthering his own personal agenda without even protecting the privacy of the people involved in the case. He also pointed out that McAdams often targeted women and people in the lower ranks of the hierarchy, ultimately causing significant damage to the academic community at Marquette (Richard Holz, quoted on the *Daily Nous*, February 5, 2015).

These are harsh comments, but they address the series of questionable decisions that McAdams made in the matter. It was mostly his open criticism and his own judgment about privacy that complicated the events, along with intentionally targeting a person with less power and status than his position entailed. An ongoing blog that continues to open people up to intense backlash from all over the internet does indeed significant damage to the working climate at a university, where an atmosphere of mutual respect is very important to maintain an effective environment of learning and research.

A post by John Wilson on *Academe*, the blog of the AAUP (American Association of University Professors), said that Holz is wrong about his decision. He writes:

This is a complete distortion of the AAUP's statements. Tolerance requires that a university not fire professors for their expression. Marquette is perfectly free to condemn McAdams for an alleged breach of civility, but not to punish him. And although some faculty might legitimately fear being criticized by McAdams, no one has a right to be free from criticism, or to punish McAdams for their own decision to self-censor. (Inside Higher Ed)

This is a questionable assessment. It basically gives every university employee the right to publicly criticize other university employees without any consequences to their

employment. The AAUP most likely saw the proceedings against McAdams as an attack on tenure. The problem is that tenure mostly protects the academic freedom of a professor and provides space for research and long-term stability on the job, which leads to a better performance. Tenure does not mean that a professor cannot be fired, which is often overlooked in the discussion. Furthermore, McAdams had a history of criticizing not only his colleagues and students, but also the university as a whole. Ultimately, this was seen as damaging to Marquette's reputation.

We can look at Marquette's mission statement and guiding values in regards to being a Catholic university to see how McAdams interpreted the university's spiritual guidelines. The school's mission statement reads:

Marquette University is a Catholic, Jesuit university dedicated to serving God by serving our students and contributing to the advancement of knowledge. Our mission, therefore, is the search for truth, the discovery and sharing of knowledge, the fostering of personal and professional excellence, the promotion of a life of faith, and the development of leadership expressed in service to others. All this we pursue for the greater glory of God and the common benefit of the human community. (Marquette University)

The two most relevant elements are "serving God by serving our students" and "promotion of a life of faith". They are both directly related to a Christian education. A secular, non-sectarian institution can still have some Christian principles in its mission

statement, but they are usually worded in a more neutral way. South Carolina's motto "learning humanizes character and does not permit it to be cruel" (University of South Carolina) is an example. It emphasizes the value of knowledge for the building of character and ethics, but it does not make a reference to a specific faith. Marquette also lists its guiding values on the school's website:

- Pledge personal and holistic development of students as our primary institutional vocation
- Pursue academic excellence and educate students who are men and women for and with others throughout the world
- Embody a spirit of interdisciplinary curiosity, research, innovation, entrepreneurship and application to change and improve ourselves, our community and our world
- Nurture an inclusive, diverse community that fosters new opportunities, partnerships, collaboration and vigorous yet respectful debate
- Live as servant leaders with a commitment to the Jesuit tradition and Catholic social teaching for all people, beliefs and faith traditions
- Create bold, ambitious plans enacted with agility, authentic accountability and a commitment to the greater good (Marquette University)

The only guiding value with a reference to Christian traditions is "Live as servant leaders with a commitment to the Jesuit tradition and Catholic social teaching for all people, beliefs and faith traditions." The other statements are common to most universities:

holistic growth, academic excellence, interdisciplinary structure, diverse community, and commitment to the greater good are principles that almost all institutions of higher learning are trying to follow. The idea of serving others is common to Christian schools. While other schools may have service opportunities for students, they are usually not part of the official agenda or curriculum. Larry Ingram identifies four basic principles of a Christian education:

- 1) a period of intensive socialization in the values and beliefs of the sectarian group
- 2) an atmosphere which limits exposure of students to influences considered harmful or sinful
- 3) training in occupationally relevant skills
- 4) expansion of students intellectual horizons through courses presenting an introduction to the knowledge of the world (Ingram 303)

The first item, “intensive socialization,” is not always the most important part of a Christian university’s agenda. Some smaller schools may require their students to visit an on-campus chapel or church for a mass or service at least once a week, while others make it optional and just emphasize the importance of prayer and reflection on the principles of the respective faith. The second item is problematic if a school does not clearly define what “harmful or sinful” actually is. For McAdams, the Vagina Monologues were clearly a harmful or sinful influence on students. But if the university administration does not see a problem with it, there is little an individual professor can do to stop the performance.

The third and fourth items are objectives that are common at most universities, while number three could even be relevant to technical colleges. These values are relevant because they were the basis for McAdams' criticism of Abbate's actions. McAdams thought that as a Catholic school, Marquette had already abandoned too many of its guiding principles, so he continuously used his blog to write about events and incidents on campus that he perceived as proving his point.

McAdams saw Abbate's behavior towards the student as coercion. However, Abbate stated that she was only trying to explain her idea of an open and unbiased classroom atmosphere. This is the argument Sartre makes: We have freedom as long as we respect the freedom of others. None of Abbate's actions after the classroom incident should be seen as coercion. She met with the student, discussed the issue, and gave the student the option to drop the class. He dropped the class, but mostly because he was failing it and not because he saw a problem with the instructor. McAdams' actions, on the other hand, should be seen as coercion: He willingly put Abbate's name and personal information (position, workplace, name and gender) on the internet to make her the target of attacks, mostly from the political right. Just because he had freedom of speech did not mean he was allowed to abuse that right to pursue his own agenda. It was defamation.

Another issue is academic freedom in general. Philip G. Altbach writes about the subject that "from medieval times, academic freedom has meant the freedom of the professor to teach without external control in his or her area of expertise, and it has implied the freedom of the student to learn" (Altbach 206). However,

as the research university idea crossed the Atlantic at the end of the 19th century, the concept of academic freedom was expanded. By the early years of the 20th century, the American Association of University Professors had defined academic freedom within the classroom and laboratory as encompassing all issues, not just those within the field of scholarly expertise. The AAUP also linked the concept to special protection of expression outside of the university. Professors were considered valuable social critics, and they were accorded special protections of speech and writings on all topics. (Altbach 207)

This created the idea of the public intellectual. Not all professors are comfortable with voicing their personal opinions outside of an academic environment, but two examples for very influential scholars with a social agenda are Michel Foucault and Noam Chomsky. Altbach also addresses the issue of political correctness, which was at the core of the McAdams/Abbate controversy: “In the United States, critics of ‘political correctness’ have charged factions within academe of imposing their views on academic department or disciplinary associations, violating as a result the norms of academic freedom” (Altbach 208). The professor’s academic freedom online is another concern (Altbach 208), which takes us into the realm of blogs and personal websites. As Altbach correctly points out,

in the United States, some have argued that the greatest threat to academic freedom comes from within the academy. Critics claim that the dominant forces in the professoriate, mainly in the social sciences and humanities, seek to enforce

‘political correctness’ – imposing academic orthodoxy, usually from a liberal or radical perspective, on some disciplines and seeking to silence those with opposing viewpoints. (Altbach 215)

He is quick to announce that “there is, in fact, little evidence that academics with divergent views have been restricted or have lost their jobs” (Altbach 215). In the case of McAdams, it was his relentless pursuit of raising awareness about a relatively minor classroom incident that led to him losing his job. It seems that Marquette had arranged itself with the idea of having a professor who constantly wrote about the university’s deviation from Catholic principles and the standards of a Christian education, but at some point his personal attacks just went too far. It was not so much a matter of political correctness, but a question of respect and tolerance for fellow employees. Graduate assistants, though much lower in the institutional hierarchy, are still colleagues and deserve the same respect as every other co-worker. It is interesting to see that political correctness is usually viewed as a tactic to further liberal or radical viewpoints. Conservatives are rarely accused of using it to promote their goals and perspectives, but this could be due to the fact that conservatives are rarely found in academic environments, at least not in positions where conservative viewpoints would make a difference in daily encounters with other people. The contact zone here is a clash between liberal and conservative as well as between graduate assistant and professor – and interestingly, the conflict was fought over a third person and a perceived injustice or “silencing” of opposing viewpoints. Looking at the conflict through Sartre's lens provides us with a different perspective on why the people involved acted the way they did. It is

not just the power differential and the contact zone that caused problems, but we can also identify some major factors of human behavior in existentialist theory.

Applying Sartrean Ethics to the Marquette Case

If we discuss the ethical conflicts in relation to Sartre's concepts, we can definitely say that both people involved made choices based on what they perceived as a lack. For Abbate, it was a lack of respect for homosexuals that was implied in the student's comments and it led her to believe that the student's viewpoints could cause a classroom disruption if they were uttered in that environment. But she took no immediate action towards them except preventing a possible discussion of same-sex marriage where it was unproductive and unrelated to the topic of the class that day. Much of what resulted from the discussion between her and the student was put into motion by McAdams and his blog post. For McAdams, it was both defending the right to freedom of speech (in a very specific way) and perhaps even more so Marquette's standards as a Catholic university. His description of the *Marquette Warrior* blog is interesting, though:

We are here to provide an independent, rather sceptical view of events at Marquette University. Comments are enabled on most posts, but extended comments are welcome and can be e-mailed to jmccadams2@juno.com. E-mailed comments will be treated like Letters to the Editor. This site has no official connection with Marquette University. Indeed, when University officials find out about it, they will doubtless want it shut down. (Marquette Warrior)

It is one thing to say that the site has no connection to Marquette, but another thing to actually include the university's name in the title and to explicitly state that the blog deals with "events at Marquette University" (Marquette Warrior). There is an immediate association between McAdams, his comments as a professor and employee of Marquette's, and his comments on events in his workplace, to put it simply. He already ran a high risk with his blog, which he indicated in his final statement of the description. There is no doubt that McAdams did not see his actions as bad faith. But the question is: how did he justify the moral background for his comments? He acted based on his personal feelings, and the consequences were proof that he stood alone with them. Of course many conservatives backed him up, some even aggressively. But no one else would have come forward to create the kind of controversy that resulted from his blog post – in fact, no one would have heard about the incident outside of the university's environment. As the advisor for the student, he already had an emotional involvement in the case, and as Sartre states, feelings are not useful as guidelines for action (Sartre *Existentialism*, 32-33).

Abbate's reaction is based on the idea of "Safe Zones" or "Safe Spaces". They are a common concept on most American college campuses to protect marginalized groups and viewpoints. The most well-known variant is supposed to create spaces free of discrimination or homophobia for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community. As Catherine Fox writes,

Safe spaces on campuses began with the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education

Network's *Safe Space* program in the early 1990s, which has provided a nationwide focus on creating visibility and educational programs on college campuses for LGBT students, particularly through the dissemination of training programs and *Safe Space* stickers (the hallmark of this program). (Fox 497)

According to Fox, the GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network) has a section in its training manual that states the purpose of the program is “increasing awareness of LGBT ... issues” and “to protect students from homophobia, heterosexism, and transphobia.” (Fox 497). A person who undergoes Safe Zone training and posts the sticker on his or her office door is commonly referred to as an “ally.” Fox has doubts about the preparedness of allies to respond to all kinds of LGBT-related issues even after a three-hour training (Fox 498). According to her, the “safe space” idea just solidifies the heterosexual vs. homosexual binary: “We lose sight of the relationality of our subjectivities and the necessity of building ally relationships outside of a hetero/homo binary” (Fox 501). This is a valid point. Why is there a need for allies if it is the policy of the university that discrimination based on sexual orientation is not allowed? Most universities require this policy to be stated on every class syllabus. Is the common expectation that most people still feel uneasy about the LGBT community if they are heterosexuals, and that it requires a mandatory training to cast off the remaining fears and reservations in order to become an ally? The “safe zone” tag also divides faculty and staff members into people who undergo training and opt to put the sticker on their doors, and people who choose not to. What are their reasons? There is a danger that people without a sticker will potentially be considered homophobic, at least by some of their colleagues

and students. The introduction of “safe zones” replaces the dichotomy of straight vs. queer with another dichotomy – an explicitly marked “safe zone” vs. a potentially dangerous, unmarked “non-safe zone” just because it does not display the sticker. Ultimately, Fox thinks that a better term to be used for the concept is “safer space” (Fox 206) because “no space is free from danger” (206).

We can clearly see seriousness at work here. No space is absolutely safe – a clean room for work on microprocessors can be contaminated, and a guarded government facility can be attacked by a suicide bomber, for example. Both Abbate and McAdams saw their own values as transcendent and absolute – for Abbate, it was the classroom as a safe space, and for McAdams, it was an idea of what “liberal tactics” looked like in the classroom and how they contributed to political correctness destroying the values of a Catholic university. The safe space concept only has the best intentions, but the idea of safety being a desirable, universal value is an example for seriousness. Since, according to Fox, there are no spaces that are completely safe, an attempt to create universally safe spaces is doomed to fail. Another example involves so-called “trigger warnings” for students. Every time students will possibly see or hear something disturbing or provocative in class, some instructors tend to notify their students in advance about it. This eliminates the problem of students becoming mentally upset about class content and also protects the instructor from possible legal consequences. On the other hand, though, it takes the element of surprise out of teaching, and it severely limits the options for a productive class discussion based on spontaneous first reactions. If the students already know what will happen, they will already have formed an opinion about the material. Maybe Abbate

would have been better off with a one-time controversial classroom discussion about same-sex marriage that would have satisfied the student's desire to talk about the topic. If a majority of students in her class had come up with better arguments for allowing same-sex marriage, it could even have changed the conservative student's mindset. In terms of political correctness, McAdams took an approach of seriousness with his own behavior, too. Liberal or conservative world views are subjective values, and even at a Catholic university, people are entitled to their own opinion. Abbate decided to run her class this way, and McAdams had no right to become involved just because he thought conservative values associated with a Catholic school were threatened. If we tie this back into Sartre's views, seriousness is at work when we take certain values as absolute. Sometimes even a Catholic school cannot always uphold the principles upon which it was founded. The world has changed, and so has the academic landscape. Teaching is a highly individual profession. No two teachers have the exact same teaching style, which is the reason why universities often require teaching philosophy statements in the hiring process. McAdams may not have run his class this way, but Abbate did and she had every right to do so.

To summarize the ethical dilemmas in this case, we can state that Abbate's reaction to the student's comment was by far the smaller issue. She may have been wrong to firmly insist on her classroom policy, but as a matter of fact, she neither told the student to drop the class if he disagreed with gay marriage, nor did she hold the student's opposition to gay marriage against him. The problem was that statements like his would be perceived as homophobic in a class environment and could not be tolerated in that context. While

this may be considered seriousness, it is certainly not bad faith. McAdams, on the other hand, blew the incident out of proportion by creating a political context, making a reference to free speech, and hinting at possible oppression of students' thoughts at Marquette. This is both seriousness and bad faith. Abbate's reaction had nothing to do with her being a "liberal", as McAdams wrote. She just followed through with her own classroom policy, and she met with the student to discuss the problem. Ignoring the student's right to free speech would have meant not meeting with the student at all and not even considering his point of view. This was not the case. If we are to consider the ethical implications, we need to weigh the value of free speech against the value of privacy and respect. Also, the decisions an instructor makes about class policies are for the most part at the discretion of the instructor, as long as they follow the standards of the university. Was freedom of speech violated in this case? The evidence indicates that it was not. The student had the opportunity to talk to Abbate and voice his concerns, and she had the freedom to respond the way she did. At no point did she pressure the student or force him to abandon his viewpoints; she only pointed out that his views would come across as offensive in a class where homophobic comments are not tolerated. It is clear that Abbate viewed her classroom as a safe space. Discrimination and possibly harmful statements are not allowed within such a designated area.

Would a person who undergoes safe zone training and chooses to post the corresponding sticker on the office door act in seriousness? It is at least a possibility. The idea of a safe zone is a human construct meant to eliminate homophobia and prejudice, and by following it the idea is elevated to a transcendent value (everyone on campus is at least

advised to follow it). In turn, people submit to this value. We certainly cannot say that the idea of a safe zone is wrong, but it elevates an arbitrary standard to universal status, and, as such, implies acting in seriousness. The same can be said for standards at religious schools that require students to regularly attend mass or that forbid co-ed dorms and instead insist on a strict separation between living spaces of male and female students. These values are also posited as transcendent and universal even though they have their origin in the material world – both are basically administrative decisions that can be overturned if a majority votes for it. Of course, a religious school would likely hold the position that these values are divine, transcendent, and universal, and would therefore not allow them to be overturned.

We can apply the insights from these two aspects of the case to some common processes central to the teaching of composition. Class discussion is bound to lead to situations where some students are uncomfortable with the things that were said. A more efficient way of handling such situations would be to address them directly in class. If a student feels uncomfortable with a statement, he or she should be able to respond immediately in a class context. This way, the people involved would have an opportunity to discuss the issue directly, without the influence of the instructor, who in this case should just be a moderator or mediator and help the students to understand the causes of their conflict. Moving the discussion to office hours and private conversations is contrary to the idea of classroom discussion, which depends on a multitude of possible viewpoints and reactions. Sartre provides a new perspective here – we project our self-image, the for-itself. The in-itself manifests in various versions of the for-itself, and it opens our personalities up to

others – for criticism, for praise, for conflict. Looking at this, it adds another dimension to existing best practices in composition. Self-reflection and anguish are not addressed very often. We all should strive to act in good faith and avoid seriousness. Instructors are subject to seriousness just as much as students are.

Blogging is an entirely different issue. Academic employees should generally be careful with what they post in blogs. Content that is damaging to the reputation of the university, its students or its employees is bound to draw consequences and, at the very least, leads to a hostile environment both online and in the workplace. One option is to use a pseudonym and to not mention the name of the university or its location. Simply referring to it as “an institution of higher learning” or “a state university” also serves the purpose of information and avoids the direct identification that occurred in McAdams’ case.

It is interesting to consider what academic bloggers have to say about blogs of this type. There is a broad discussion about blogging in the academic world. Jill Walker notices that research blogs have become much more established compared to the time she started her own blog, which was in 2000 (Walker 5). Nowadays, she has noticed a change in her own writing online: “And yet every time I began to write, I felt that anxiety I thought frequent blogging had dispelled long ago: the anxiety that if I said what I really wanted to say I wouldn’t know how to defend it” (Walker 1). Interestingly, she sees academic blogs as being very similar to lectures:

... an individual blog functions in much the same way as the lecture podium. One person, or a group of people, is up on the podium and is thus very clearly defined as the main speaker, the person you should be listening to. Questions and comments from the audience are often encouraged, but they are clearly positioned as subordinate to the main speaker's words. (Walker 3-4)

McAdams used his blog as an extension of his position to write about topics that were related to his everyday duties. But the sheer fact that in his blog he still occupied a position of power made his writing relevant when it came under scrutiny by his university's officials. Walker's dilemma is at work in McAdams' case, too – how was he going to defend what he wrote, even though at the time of its production it was what he wanted to say?

The genre of McAdams' blog entries regarding Abbate is also hard to classify. According to Liping Deng and Allan Yuen, academic blogs essentially serve five basic functions: “documentation of experience, keeping others updated, sharing teaching ideas, expressions of feelings, expressions of thoughts or reflection, seeking help or advice” (Deng and Yuen). McAdams wrote what could be classified as a mix between expression of feelings and expression of thoughts, but in an offensive way. Personal attacks would most likely be censored in a student blog if a graduate assistant started writing about students who are doing badly in class or whose behavior is problematic. It is easy to see why McAdams was punished for the things he wrote – in his position of greater authority, he was held to even higher standards.

Julia Davies and Guy Merchant also write about the character of blogs:

Blogs, as an emerging genre of digital communication, are characterized by a

tendency to blend the personal with the public. The similarities with more conventional journal writing are reasonably clear, but yet, to write a blog is a little like displaying a personal journal in a shop window, for friends and passers-by to read at their leisure. Similarly, blogs often blur distinctions between the serious and the frivolous. (Davies and Merchant 169)

Personal and public, serious and frivolous – there are certain dangers in using a private blog to write about professional events. This is one of the reasons why some academic bloggers prefer to stay anonymous. McAdams knew the risk involved with his open criticism of Abbate on the web, but he was willing to take it. As Davies and Merchant put it: “Through this unfiltered self-publication we are potentially vulnerable, open to misinterpretation or even ridicule. Yet at the same time our blogs, by making us visible, can also develop respect and reputation.” (192) It is up to the individual blogger to decide which way to go. Ad-hominem attacks in an academic blog by a tenured professor are certainly the wrong way. We also need to ask the question about the potential audience that McAdams was trying to reach with his blog. It was broadly aimed at a conservative, possibly religious readership. But it did not necessarily have an academic target audience. People who studied and worked at Marquette would probably have found the blog offensive, as McAdams himself anticipated in his description of the blog. A larger conservative group of readers might not have been interested in the religious context of a Catholic school, but more interested in the political commentary based on “liberal agendas” and seemingly unnecessary political correctness. As such, the blog could be classified as a political blog filtered through an academic lens. This is a very rare example for an academic blog. Most blogs by university instructors focus on educational issues,

classroom-related content, and implications for teaching. If politics are touched as a subject, they usually are immediately related to topics in the classroom and not used for attacks on an institution or individuals. Professors who choose to write about issues in society or political controversies often do so detached from their role as educators. They take on the role of a commentator and do not expect identification with the institution that employs them. The very title of McAdams' blog, *Marquette Warrior*, went against that notion.

It is interesting to look at the consequences of this controversy. As of now, both McAdams and Abbate no longer work at Marquette. Abbate transferred to University of Colorado at Boulder, and McAdams was placed on indefinite academic leave on December 12, 2014. He was also suspended from teaching and all faculty duties (Wikipedia). In July of 2018, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that McAdams was to be reinstated, and he said that he was planning to return to work (Newsmax). Even though the solution feels morally correct, it was enough for Abbate to move to a different school. An existentialist approach to the problem would have involved generosity on both sides. The question remains: Why did Abbate and McAdams never meet to talk about the issue? Abbate could have come to the conclusion that it was less of a personal attack, but more of a routine reaction that McAdams had shown several times before when he thought conservative and Christian values were threatened at Marquette. McAdams in turn might have realized that one single instructor and student are not indications of liberal culture destroying a Catholic university from the inside. McAdams did not even consider that his viewpoint was not the only way to look at the problem. His blog contributed to the escalation. By its design, the blog was an instrument of promoting the

views and opinions that McAdams regarded as correct or at least preferable to other options. This is an attitude of seriousness. An opinionated blog with a conservative agenda constructs values as they fit the writer's world view. Everything that does not fit into this constructed system is rejected in bad faith. Abbate, on the other hand, became a victim of established classroom practices. One of the main reasons she had for not allowing further classroom discussion about same-sex marriage was due to the topic not even being relevant for the general content of the class itself. As such, there was no need to make other students feel uncomfortable. In her case, realizing that a safe space designation is also a result of seriousness would have allowed her to let the student voice his opinion in class, with the possible result of protest and counter-arguments by other students. Helping the student realize that his attitude was a result of seriousness as well could have put the uneasiness to rest. If he had still showed no respect for supporters of same-sex marriage after a longer discussion, he could then have been offered to drop the class. It is safe to say that this procedure would have left a lot less to criticize for McAdams. One of the main reasons why McAdams acted in seriousness and bad faith was that he took the issue beyond the classroom (and even the university's campus) by putting it on the internet and opening it up to different contexts and different power dynamics. He could have communicated with Abbate personally if he saw the need for it. His blog post served no purpose other than a perceived personal vendetta against Abbate.

We can apply this to composition studies in several ways. The first insight to be gained is that teachers need to be more aware of their own moral convictions and how they translate into a class environment. No one really has an ethical *tabula rasa* in their minds – there are instances when we act according to our own ethical standards, and it

will lead to confrontations with people who do not share similar standards. Being more aware of moral standards and values as human constructs can give us the flexibility to get over a possible offense. Several scholars have written about student writing that makes teachers uncomfortable, but it can also be student behavior that makes teachers uncomfortable. A different type of contact zone is at work when a student has to accept an unfamiliar classroom culture and unfamiliar guidelines for class discussions. In the case of students, they can get an insight into the dynamics of dissent. Sometimes what they say will not be accepted by everyone. They cannot dwell on it for an extended period of time and even bring other people into the fold just to push their own personal agenda. Professors can be guilty of this as well. McAdams acted like a self-proclaimed “Defender of the Faith”. Identifying too much with a certain concept and then pushing it to the limits of what is socially and legally acceptable is not just seriousness – it is fanaticism. Sartre can teach us how to avoid it: Feelings are a bad basis for making important decisions. Values are entirely human-made. Seriousness occurs when we see certain values as absolute and transcendent. Students and instructors can overcome anguish and act in good faith if they allow their thoughts to undergo a process of evaluation and connect it to the notion of freedom. Humans are abandoned, but also condemned to be free. The academy values its notion of freedom of research. The question is: Is there also a freedom of teaching, or a freedom of instruction? Because if there is, then Cheryl Abbate has done nothing wrong.

Chapter 2: German Politics and the Anguish of Plagiarism

This chapter deals with plagiarism committed by several German politicians in their dissertations. It was discovered many years after they submitted them to their committees via a crowdsourced analysis of their writing on the internet and made the news from the end of 2010 to roughly the middle of 2011. An additional related event one year later (2012) is briefly mentioned at the end of the chapter. Plagiarism is an important ethical issue in composition pedagogy. The only ways to “cheat” in a paper are to engage in patchwriting, using online sources via copy and paste, and not properly citing material that was not written by the student. There are different explanations for plagiarism and for the mindset that causes students to plagiarize, but we can certainly say that it is another example of acting in bad faith.

As far as Sartre’s theories are concerned, this chapter will focus on the concepts of bad faith and anguish as they are defined in *Being and Nothingness*. Both terms are very closely connected here, and attempts to avoid anguish often lead to bad faith. Another idea comes from Sartre’s *What is Literature* – the assumption that writing is addressed to all people (Sartre *Literature*, 61). Ethical responsibility in the cases discussed here concerns the behavior of the individual in the writing process, but the finished product is theoretically available to everyone, especially with the internet firmly established as the

primary tool for research in databases and on the “free web” itself. Most writers who write for an audience of any kind and do not keep it entirely to themselves can potentially end up with their work on display on the internet. A writer’s goal should be to mediate individual anguish with civic responsibility. I will also try to establish a link between James C. Scott’s *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, Jacques Rancière’s *Disagreement*, and Michel Foucault’s lecture on *Governmentality*. Scott, Rancière and Foucault are relevant for the implications of plagiarism in the world of politics and related to civic responsibility. Some of the questions raised by the events are: What led these politicians to commit plagiarism in the first place? Why did they lose so much credibility after being punished for something that was not immediately related to their daily work? What are the policing institutions in these cases, and how do they relate to writing instruction? There are some similarities between students and the politicians – they all had limited time, high pressure, and they wanted to get ahead and advance their careers with minimal effort. As many people who were engaged in assessing their writing pointed out, they were not very invested in their writing and would never have given it much thought later in their lives had it not been exposed as being flawed and full of plagiarism.

The cases were the first where politicians were actually held accountable for academic mistakes and violations of the academic code of conduct. Before, most criticism that resulted in resignations was based on corruption, private scandals or party strategy – removing a person from office because he or she did not stick to the academic honor code had been unheard of. What we see here is an example for discourse within a political party and discourse outside of it—in the press.

Scholars and teachers of writing often acknowledge that correct citation can be tricky. The question is, are citation rules absolute ethical principles, and do people automatically plagiarize by not citing correctly according to a certain style or format? To use a sociolinguistic term, the academic community is a community of practice, which means it uses certain techniques and forms of expression that are characteristic for its type of communication. Direct quotations, paraphrasing, and summary are parts of the linguistic practices utilized by the community. By operating within this community, its members accept its standards and codes of conduct. Not having full knowledge of these codes does not protect members from punishment, just as not being aware of certain laws does not protect citizens from fines or jail time if the laws are broken. A different consequence results from academic writing “going public.” Most of the time, academic writing has a very limited readership. In the case of freshman English classes, for example, it is usually only the professor and a few peer reviewers among classmates. With published dissertations, the readership is theoretically larger, but in fact limited to people within the same field, and often not even that if the person who wrote the dissertation does not opt for an academic career. This was the case for all the writers involved in the instances of plagiarism that I am discussing in this chapter. Their writing went public when there was reasonable doubt about its quality. Because the texts were publicly available, they were uploaded to the internet and posted to invite analysis and scrutiny.

Cases of Plagiarism in German Politics

During the political events I am discussing in this chapter, several prominent party members of both the Conservatives (CDU) and the Liberals (FDP) had to step down from their offices after their dissertations were found plagiarized. In the case of defense minister Carl-Theodor zu Guttenberg, it started slowly with people looking at his widely unknown dissertation *Verfassung und Verfassungsvertrag* (constitution and constitutional contract) more closely and noticing stylistic flaws:

The affair erupted when a law professor from Bremen University began writing a review of the thesis, with the aid of the internet. Mr. zu Guttenberg says his PhD thesis was all his own work. The popular minister had rejected as “absurd” initial reports in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that one passage was copied word for word from a newspaper article and another was taken from a public lecture, without attribution. *Spiegel* magazine reported that the minister had also used a paragraph from the US Embassy website without attribution and the list of alleged instances of plagiarism has continued to grow as journalists and internet-users pore over its contents. The University of Bayreuth, where he completed his PhD on constitutional developments in the US and EU, has given him a fortnight to respond to the allegations in writing. After calling an impromptu news conference on Friday, the beleaguered minister accepted that there were errors in his work but that did not amount to plagiarism. “It was compiled over the course of about seven years while I was at the same time working as a member of parliament and while I was a young father. It contains mistakes, no doubt about it. I am extremely unhappy about every single one of those mistakes.” The opposition Social Democrats have warned that if the allegations of plagiarism are found to be true

then the defence minister will have to stand down because of the damage to his credibility. (BBC News Europe online, 18 February 2011)

Guttenberg was the first, but not the only high-ranking politician to face plagiarism accusations. Soon after, Silvana Koch-Mehrin, a member of the FDP, member of the European Parliament since 2004 and one of 14 vice-presidents of the assembly, was also accused of plagiarism, and her alma mater, Heidelberg, revoked her PhD on June 15, 2011. She stepped down from her position as vice-president, but kept her seat in parliament. The last politician to be hit by the scrutiny of the press and privately interested scholars was Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, also a Liberal (FDP). He has both German and Greek citizenship and was often viewed as a poster boy for integration in contemporary Germany. He had received his PhD at Bonn, but the university revoked it on July 13, 2011 because of plagiarism. Still, he kept his seat in the European Parliament. The discourse about these two was a bit different:

Another high-profile German politician has been stripped of a doctorate for plagiarism. This time the culprit tried to explain away his bad habit, blaming it on a stint at Oxford in the 1990s. On Wednesday, the faculty of philosophy at the University of Bonn announced that it was annulling the doctorate awarded to MEP Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, a member of the liberal Free Democrats (FDP). The scandal is the latest political plagiarism case exposed in recent months, following those of former defence minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg and MEP Silvana Koch-Mehrin. On Wednesday Bonn University said that Chatzimarkakis had used verbatim passages from other authors' work without using quotation marks. While

he did mark the passages with footnotes, there was insufficient acknowledgment of the original authors. Yet, the politician has insisted he thought his method was sound, saying he had picked it up at one of the most prestigious universities in the world while he was a research fellow at St Anthony's College, Oxford University in 1995. (The Guardian online, 14 July 2011)

The common opinion was that Guttenberg had been a far better politician than the other two and had made some very sound decisions in office both as Minister of the Economy in the Great Coalition (CDU and SPD) and Minister of Defense in the new coalition between CDU and FDP. Koch-Mehrin and Chatzimarkakis were seen as incompetent right from the start, even though they were popular within their own parties. While all three are members of the “new generation” of politicians, Guttenberg became popular through his common man lifestyle, attending rock concerts with his wife (both are fans of hard rock, such as AC/DC) and not being as reclusive as old-school conservative politicians. Even after he stepped down from his minister post and had to renounce his PhD, him being the only one of the three to do so on his own and not waiting for the university to take action, many people still wanted to keep him as a minister.

All three candidates had their strategies to cope with the accusations, but again, Koch-Mehrin and Chatzimarkakis immediately accused their respective universities by saying it was the fault of the committees that let them pass, which led to a harsh backlash by Bonn and Heidelberg, where officials stated that it was not correct to assume that plagiarism earned PhDs at their institution.

Politicians and Public Goods

Politicians are not always viewed as completely honest. Most of the time, it is not so much a matter of lying, but a matter of not telling the truth (or not all of the truth). The biggest hit a politician can take to his or her ethos is a loss of credibility with her or his constituents. Once a politician is no longer credible, it is usually time to step down and move to the corporate world, where a for-profit mentality that only benefits one company and not the common good is acceptable. The question remains: Why do people with a law or business degree decide to enter the world of politics instead of working for a much higher pay for a major corporation? John Arthos calls the involvement in public affairs *civic humanism*:

The ideal of civic humanism, although controversial, has had a powerful influence as a model of education. It represents the possibility of a close harmony between two often competing ends; the cultivation of the fullness of the person and the good of the community, the two intertwined in a close mutual embrace. (Arthos 189)

These ideals go all the way back to Isocrates, who tried to educate people in rhetoric to not become lawyers, but statesmen—in other words, politicians. According to Isocrates, humans are driven by three desires: the desire for pleasure, the desire for gain, and the desire for honor. A person thus has to choose between citizenly conduct based on moderation or heroic conduct based on excess. The ideal outcome would be to the benefit of the people and for the common good. Based on these ideals, a politician should

abandon the desire for pleasure and gain and only give in to his desire for honor, which can be achieved through serving one's country, that is, the common good. In his lecture on governmentality, Foucault defines the good as follows:

The good is obedience to the law, hence the good for sovereignty is that people should obey it. This is an essential circularity which, whatever its theoretical structure, moral justification or practical effects, comes very close to what Machiavelli said when he stated that the primary aim of the prince was to retain his principality. We always come back to this self-referring circularity of sovereignty or principality. (Foucault 1991b, 95)

Ministers are no exception to the law. Since Foucault bases much of his lecture on Machiavelli, it makes sense to look at the source text, too. *The Prince*, chapter eight (*On those who have become princes by crime*) is particularly relevant for the topic of this chapter. Machiavelli talks about injustices committed by a prince and their consequences:

In a word, injuries should be committed all at once, because benefits should be distributed very gradually, so the taste will last longer. Above all, a prince should live with his subjects on such terms that no accident, whether favorable or unfavorable, can force him to change his conduct. When misfortune strikes, harsh measures are too late, and the good things you do are not counted to your credit because you seem to have acted under compulsion, and no one will thank you for that. (Machiavelli 28)

Claiming a title based on false merit is an injury, and as such an injury that was committed all at once. The question is, if no one was physically hurt by committing this injury, why does it weigh as heavily in the public eye? Titles are rare in today's world.

Most European countries have abolished nobility, and in Germany, while titles are still passed on within noble families (there are still counts, barons and the like), they cannot claim any political power based on their titles, and succession is an internal matter as well. Academic titles have to be earned, and it takes many years to obtain a PhD. For the hard-working general public, the world of the academy is a foreign world, and if a politician is perceived as doing solid work, it does not matter if he has a PhD or not. Helmut Kohl had a doctorate in political science, but no one really cared about it during his time as chancellor, which lasted 16 years. It might well be the case that a PhD, used only as an item of additional prestige, is more harmful than beneficent once the public finds out it was acquired in a dishonest way.

The aim of a political party is to gain power and secure it. No matter what the party's agenda is, parliament involves a government and an opposition. Only the party in government can pursue its own goals actively. The opposition acts as a controlling and observing instance, but it cannot direct the way the country is governed. Election campaigns are either designed to get politicians re-elected or to put the opposition into power by gaining more votes than the current government. Obedience to the law gains a new dimension when it is applied to a politician's personal code of conduct. A person who cheated on an important part of his credentials (such as an academic degree) did not obey the law, or at least not all of the law. There are loopholes, and plagiarism without profit is not a crime. None of the politicians who were involved in plagiarism went to court for their behavior, but their universities acted as policing institutions.

Being a politician in Germany involves substantial retirement benefits and immunity to criminal persecution while being a member of parliament. But politicians are

under much more scrutiny than managers, and their private life is of greater interest to the press. Horst Seehofer, one of Angela Merkel's rivals in the CSU, the Bavarian branch of the conservative CDU, almost fell victim to an uproar in the press about him having a child born out of wedlock. Bavaria, one of Germany's economic powerhouses in industrial centers like Munich, Nuremberg, or Augsburg, also has some very rural areas that are Catholic by tradition, so divorces and cheating on one's spouse are frowned upon. Cheating in an area where it is not only forbidden, but viewed as dishonorable conduct in the academic community was new and posed a whole new question to the political community. What if the person who did it was by definition "a good politician"? Many people wanted to keep Guttenberg in office, while the other two, Koch-Mehrin and Chatzimakakis, immediately lost all credibility. Guttenberg was also the only one to renounce his PhD himself, not waiting for the university to take it away from him. Still, it did not help to restore his ethos. The plagiarism scandals added a new dimension to political ethos: It was not only important to have credibility "on the job", that is, in everyday political life, but also within a politician's own biography all the way to a title that previously had only marginal importance. A PhD in Germany is viewed as prestigious, but only if the person who owns it works outside the field of academia. In academia, it is not always a requirement, but often necessary to obtain a permanent position at a university or school of applied sciences. Among politicians, degrees in Law or Business Administration are most common. It is no secret that corporations pay far more money to people with degrees in these fields than the world of politics does. Why would anyone who had the opportunity to enter the business world with far less scrutiny than the political platform opt to be a politician instead? Sometimes, it is a last resort

because a person may not actually have the tools to be successful in business, even though the credentials are there. Peer networks and “old money” in Bavaria have done their fair share of putting people into offices they should never have held in the first place.

Press, Policing, and Transcripts

A true democracy allows its citizens freedom of speech, and that applies to the press as well as all other media. Germany’s press landscape is dominated by newspapers, from regionals like the *Saarbrücker Zeitung*, which is the only big newspaper for a whole state (Saarland) to regionals that are in fact nationals, such as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (published in Frankfurt, but available all over Germany) or the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (published in Munich). There are also two very important political magazines that are published weekly, *Der Spiegel* and *Focus*. Both of them picked up the plagiarism affair as soon as it went public. In the aforementioned cases, the press can be viewed as a policing institution. Rancière writes about policing:

Politics is generally seen as the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution. I propose to give this system of distribution and legitimization another name. I propose to call it *the police*. (Rancière 28, emphasis in the original)

Rancière is ready to point out that policing “is not so much the ‘disciplining’ of bodies as a rule governing their appearing, a configuration of occupations and the properties of the

spaces where these occupations are distributed” (Rancière 29). The most important statement about the police in relation to my topic is this one: “Whether the police is sweet and kind does not make it any less the opposite of politics” (Rancière 31). The press is the opposite of politics. It does not submit itself under a party agenda (even though some newspapers have a conservative or liberal stance), it does not act according to a party strategy, it does not campaign for a candidate during elections, and it does not back down from a confrontation if there is the need to bring a hidden transcript to light. More often than not, the press goes too far in its pursuit of what it regards as the truth or the fact of the matter, but counterstatements or disclaimers are always available as means to set things right for the press as a legal entity, even though the damage may have been done to a person’s ethos already.

In order to understand the difference between public and hidden transcripts, we need to take a look at James C. Scott’s *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. While most of the book is based on G.W.F. Hegel’s Master and Slave metaphor, some of it can be applied to the world of politics as well. A dissertation in Germany is always a public transcript. For a person to be allowed to carry “Dr.” as a title, the dissertation has to be published in some way. A printed publication is not always the norm anymore. Quite often, the text is only saved in a digital format (such as PDF) and made available through the alma mater’s library, where it is stored and can be downloaded at any given time. Guttenberg’s dissertation was published, but no one ever really looked at it. As a person who did not enter the world of academia, but became a politician, he had little relevance for other scholars. The same can be said about Koch-Mehrin and Chatzimarkakis. Scott writes: “The first open statement of a hidden transcript, a declaration that breaches the

etiquette of power relations, that breaks an apparently calm surface of silence and consent, carries the force of a symbolic declaration of war” (Scott 8). The people who scrutinized the dissertations of politicians to find out if they were plagiarized or not did not really have a hidden transcript. They used a public transcript to find out if there was a hidden transcript within the public transcript. Machiavelli also talks about conspiracies, and this passage from chapter nineteen (*On avoiding contempt and hatred*) is relevant for the matter of hidden transcripts:

As for one’s subjects; even when no outside disturbance occurs, there is danger they may form a secret conspiracy; from such a plot the prince’s best protection lies in not being hated or despised, and keeping himself in popular favor. [...] One of the strongest counters that a prince has against conspiracies is not to be hated by the mass of the people, because every man who conspires always thinks that by killing the prince he will be pleasing the people. (Machiavelli 52)

Again, we can substitute “politician” for “prince,” and the passage leads us right back into our analysis of public opinion. The universities “killed the princes” by taking away their titles, the parties did so by removing them from office, if the individuals did not resign themselves. But it was not really hatred that caused the policing organs to act the way they did; perhaps doubt is the better term. If there is doubt about a prince’s ability to lead, conspiracies might be developing, and if there is doubt about a politician’s credentials, experts may find the situation motivating enough to do research on a person’s background in a way that had not yet been utilized. Is everyone who is not a politician automatically a member of the subordinate group, as Scott sees it? He writes: “The hidden transcript of subordinate groups, in turn, reacts back on the public transcript by

engendering a subculture and by opposing its own variant form of social domination against that of the dominant elite. Both are realms of power and interests” (Scott 27). Dominance and submission is not openly acknowledged in politics. In a democracy, people should have the impression that they are governed, not ruled. Does the press create a hidden transcript, too? The answer is yes, as far as strategies and interests are concerned.

Finally, the whole topic of plagiarized honors leads us to ethics. It is a classic example of what Sartre calls *bad faith*. A person who plagiarizes on the highest of possible levels – a dissertation – obviously acts under the belief that he or she is the only one who does it, thus not foreseeing a possible discovery of the inappropriate behavior. It suggests a distorted view of the academic community, too. A lack of respect for intellectual property of others and a personality that views theft of ideas as legitimate as long as it aids personal development and a political career indicates unethical behavior. To come back to Arthos, he mentions Petrarch’s virtues, which are all social virtues: honesty, fortitude, justice, prudence, and modesty. The plagiarizing politicians failed in terms of honesty. Arthos goes into further detail by looking at Aristotle and Hans-Georg Gadamer:

When Aristotle says that ‘virtue is conduct *with logos* . . . it means that this conduct is *meta tou logou*, that it does not merely imply thinking, but thinking is in the middle of it’. When Gadamer speaks of ‘a knowledge that rises from the being of a person, his human existence,’ he is harvesting the Aristotelian tradition that ethos and logos are coordinate. There is not first learning and then action, since knowledge is the fruit of experience. (Arthos 194, emphasis in the original)

In the ideal case, an educated person will be much more likely to act ethically than an uneducated one, simply because learning broadens intellectual horizons and confronts people with facts, views, opinions, and theories that may have been previously unknown to them.

Implications for the Composition Classroom

The politicians' cases raise several issues that are relevant for composition studies: Attribution is always a central topic when it comes to intellectual property. Sometimes incorrect paraphrasing and incomplete footnotes or works cited entries are enough to count as plagiarism, even if it was unintentional. Ethical responsibility begins with acknowledging mistakes and explaining what caused them. As we will see later in the chapter, most of the accused politicians were not willing to admit they made mistakes. The academic writer has a responsibility to his or her community. One of the first things that First-Year English classes try to teach freshmen is respecting the standards of the academy regarding correct citations. The common instructor's phrase in most syllabi, "If I catch you cheating, you will receive an F" is almost exclusively targeted towards plagiarism because there are not many other options for cheating in a writing class. With hardly any written tests besides short quizzes that often allow the use of the textbook, the research papers are the most crucial components that make up the final grade. If students cheat, it is usually in these papers, and usually by plagiarizing content from other sources. The teacher's role is foremost to communicate civic responsibility. Every student becomes a part of the academy as soon as he or she enrolls at a university, and it does not

matter if it is a community college, technical college, state university, private university, or even an Ivy League school. As members of the academy, students are expected to act according to common standards, such as not trying to pass someone else's work as their own. The learning process is about putting one's own thoughts and ideas into writing. This will be a slow process for most students and will often lead to sub-standard writing at first, but the goal in most classes is to reach an acceptable level of writing through revision and restructuring in the course of the semester. This can be achieved without plagiarism, and the incentive of having achieved a good grade based on one's own merit is a valid one.

Scholars and teachers of writing often acknowledge that correct citation can be tricky. The question is, are citation rules absolute ethical principles, and do people automatically plagiarize by not citing correctly according to a certain style or format? To use a sociolinguistic term, the academic community is a community of practice, which means it uses certain techniques and forms of expression that are characteristic for its type of communication. Direct quotations, paraphrasing, and summary are parts of the linguistic practices utilized by the community. By operating within this community, its members accept its standards and codes of conduct. Not having full knowledge of these codes does not protect members from punishment, just as not being aware of certain laws does not protect citizens from fines or jail time if the laws are broken. A different consequence results from academic writing "going public." Most of the time, academic writing has a very limited readership. In the case of freshman English classes, for example, it is usually only the professor and a few peer reviewers among classmates.

With published dissertations, the readership is theoretically larger, but in fact limited to people within the same field, and often not even that if the person who wrote the dissertation does not opt for an academic career. This was the case for all the writers involved in the instances of plagiarism that I am discussing in this chapter. Their writing went public when there was reasonable doubt about its quality. Because the texts were publicly available, they were uploaded to the internet and posted to invite analysis and scrutiny.

Attribution is one part of a concept of plagiarism, but ownership is another. As Wendy Sutherland-Smith writes, ownership has become an established term in academics:

The concept that words could be kidnapped or misappropriated with legal recrimination, saw the legal birth of ownership or authorial rights over literary work and with it, the notion of plagiarism. Although the term plagiarism itself is not embodied in law, university plagiarism policies reflect an institutional legislative stance by including words such as *wrongful*, *stealing*, *misappropriating* and *taking* to describe using of work of another and attributing it to oneself.

(Sutherland-Smith 84, emphasis in the original)

Universities do not distinguish between harmful and non-harmful plagiarism. At the same time, unintentional plagiarism may also be punished. Even if just one quoted book or article is not listed in the works cited (sometimes accidentally), it can lead to an accusation. Another aspect of plagiarism is immediately related to a university's reputation. Sean Zwagerman summarizes the problem perfectly: "In addition to being an ethical concern, academic dishonesty has the pragmatic consequences of threatening the

imagined meritocracy within the academy, the reputation of a university's name, and the corresponding value of its diplomas in the job market" (Zwagerman 677). Grade inflation diminishes a diploma's value by lessening the value of a good GPA due to most people receiving an A regardless of their performance, but lenience regarding plagiarism is far more damaging because it might mean that some students relied mostly on the work of others to achieve their diplomas.

Rebecca Moore Howard provides some explanations for the reactions professors have when graduate students plagiarize. She writes:

The specter of cheating graduate students takes on intensified force because it edges so close to the audience, the professors themselves. Faculty may feel a comfortable distance between themselves and the undergraduates whom they teach, but graduate students are another matter entirely. Graduate students are the soon-to-be colleagues of the faculty, a mirror of what the faculty themselves were, only moments ago. Graduate students are collaborators and coauthors with the faculty. The successes of the graduate students are the successes of their mentors. And their failures are our failures. (Moore Howard 2008 a, 92)

It is easy to see why the professors involved in judging the politicians were so upset. In allowing these people to pass, they failed as judges of their work, and the fact that they plagiarized at all could be seen as a failure to establish ethical standards. In most cases though, plagiarism involves what Moore Howard calls *patchwriting*. She defines it as "copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one synonym for another" (Moore Howard 1999, xvii). It shows – at the very least – that students did spend some time with the source material and then

tried to incorporate it into their own writing, of course not according to ethical academic standards. Moore Howard is quick to adjust the definition of patchwriting: “It is something that all academic writers do. Patchwriting belongs not in a category with cheating on exams and purchasing term papers, but in a category with the ancient tradition of learning through apprenticeship and mimicry” (Moore Howard 1999, xviii). It is the most common form of plagiarism because it is the easiest way to plagiarize (sometimes even unintentionally), and it is also the easiest form of plagiarism to detect and correct. The challenge lies in teaching students how to avoid it when they are trying to paraphrase source material or use it to back up their statements in papers. In a different article, co-authored with Linda Adler-Kassner and Chris Anson, Moore Howard talks about the general practices universities use to make students aware of plagiarism: “The remediation of individuals occurs in institutional documents like the student handbook, which typically includes a definition of plagiarism, together with institutional regulations against the practice of plagiarism” (Adler-Kassner et al. 2008 b, 241). This is problematic because on one hand, it aims at giving students enough information to avoid plagiarism, but on the other hand it already sets up methods of possible punishment (ibid.). Citing Bill Marsh, the authors compare services that check papers for possible plagiarism (such as Turnitin.com) to an “ethical drug test” (242) similar to drug tests in the workforce. If such testing procedures are put in place, students are automatically viewed as potential violators of academic standards, and hence there is a need to test all of them for said violations, whether their writing is suspicious or not. What plagiarism detection programs do not provide is a flexible base for analysis. Not everything these programs detect is in fact a case of plagiarism. The authors ask for a reframing of the concept of plagiarism,

basing it on the writer's fluid state of development:

All writers are always in a developmental trajectory; writing is always intertextual; a variety of rhetorical and pragmatic forces work against attribution of sources; the use of texts is a complex act that is steeped in the conventions (disciplinary, behavioral, and otherwise) of academe; and the sanctioned academic expectations for attribution are often applied unevenly, even by experienced, academic writers. (Adler-Kassner et al. 243)

In other words, not all cases of plagiarism are equally severe, and even professional writers in the world of academics are at risk to plagiarize at certain times. If we go back to the reasons why students choose to plagiarize (sometimes unintentionally), it is safe to say that many factors contribute to dishonesty in writing. For students, it is hard to find their own voice as writers. Instructors inspect an original topic for a paper, but at the same time the statements and arguments have to be backed up and reinforced with citations from reliable sources. If students only write from their own perspective (such as "I think that racism is still a problem in the United States, and here is why..."), we criticize them for not using secondary sources. If they mostly quote from articles and books and just write a few brief paragraphs that agree with these sources, we criticize them for just "parroting what other authors said." It is hard to find a balance between the two extremes.

In an attempt to characterize cheating students, Miller et al. posit that "cheating declines with age" (Miller et al. 12), which means that students are much more likely to cheat in elementary and middle school than in high school or even college. The reason is that cheating students often do not even make it to college. Furthermore, "it also appears

that students who begin cheating earlier in life are likely to continue to engage in this behavior in college” (Miller et al.13). They cite Stephen Davis and Wayne Ludvigson saying that “98 percent of students who cheated before entering the university also continued to cheat while at the university” (ibid.). It seems to be all about not getting caught. Objectively, it is much easier to cheat in the humanities than it is in the sciences. Unless students copy other people's results and answers on a written test, lab work and take-home exams often do not allow cheating. Scientific calculators are allowed in Mathematics and Engineering, for example, and other items are not really helpful in solving an equation where the answer is yet unknown. For an English paper, patchwriting and even hiring a ghostwriter are readily available. There is an industry behind writing papers for money. The people who write papers on demand are not technically guilty of a criminal offense – they just perform a service for money. The students who pay for the papers are the ones guilty of violating the academic code of conduct. All of them know that passing someone else's work as their own is also plagiarism. Interestingly, Miller et al. found no significant cultural differences in cheating behavior - “it is also evident that no culture that has been studied is completely free from academic dishonesty” (Miller et al. 14). The common stereotype that Asian cultures view a lack of attribution as “honoring the authors” by using their work has been disproven. Asians who grew up in an academic environment have been told the same things as Europeans and Americans: Do not cheat. Do not plagiarize. Do not engage in any kind of dishonest behavior. Yet still, it happens all over the world. Miller et al. also cite a Newstead study which classified students in three groups: “those avoiding the real world, called stopgap students; those trying for a better job or more money; and those pursuing an education for personal

development” (Miller et al. 17). The results of the study: “Cheating frequency was highest with the stopgap group and lowest for the personal development group; all three groups were significantly different. Education and social work students were least likely to be classified in the stopgap group, which had the highest incidence of reported cheating.” (ibid.)

As we can see, subjects where giving a good example is part of the professional ethos are less likely to attract cheaters. This is a direct way of saying it, but preparing for a career as a teacher, social worker, or counselor is about conveying trust. Few people would trust a cheater, which brings us full circle with the politicians who lost their credibility after the controversy. It is also a matter of how high the stakes are – some people in high school desperately need an A in math, others desperately need a C. The psychological studies show that either student would feel inclined to cheat under certain circumstances. The pragmatic forces at work here push students towards finding a solution on their own. In high school, there is most likely not much support available. In college, there are tutors, writing centers, student success centers, and similar ways of getting help. The freedom college students suddenly have after finishing high school – and in many cases, living away from their parents for the first time ever – often reinforces their feeling of independence. This can also lead to a feeling of independence from outside input. If they made it to college, then that is the time when they can finally be independent and figure things out on their own. It does not always work.

Bad Faith and Academic Communities

Are we able to judge virtue from the politicians' reactions to the accusations? The first move that Chatzimarkakis and Koch-Mehrin made was to blame their universities for letting them pass. It did not occur to them that their flawed idea of scholarship and lack of academic righteousness led to their demise. If the committee let them pass, then it must have been the committee's fault. The problem on the highest level of scholarship, a dissertation, might be the initial trust that the advisors and committees put into their candidates. Who would expect dishonest behavior when the stakes are that high? Consequently, the hit to a person's ethos is even more violent when the truth comes out. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre opens his chapter about bad faith with a definition of the liar: "The ideal description of the liar would be a cynical consciousness, affirming truth within himself, denying it in his words, and denying that negation as such" (Sartre *Being*, 87). Bad faith is different, though: "Bad faith then has in appearance the structure of falsehood. Only what changes everything is the fact that in bad faith it is from myself that I am hiding the truth" (Sartre *Being*, 89). Bad faith is still a lie, but in most cases the person who acts in bad faith has convinced him- or herself that such action is not morally wrong. There is still a deceived person (everyone but the person who acts in bad faith), but there is no longer a deceiver because the person who acts in bad faith is not conscious of deceiving other people than him- or herself. In short, "the duality of the deceiver and the deceived does not exist here" (ibid.). Also, "the subject deceives himself about the meaning of his conduct" (Sartre *Being*, 91). If we use this concept of bad faith to classify

the behavior of the politicians, we can say that all three initially deceived themselves in this way. Guttenberg finally became aware that he made mistakes (which he did not immediately acknowledge as instances of plagiarism), turning bad faith into good faith by admitting that he deceived himself. Of course he did not use this expression, but Sartre's definitions are in line with his explanations. Chatzimarkakis and Koch-Mehrin continued in bad faith by blaming their committees who let them pass. A common saying in Germany goes "where there is no judge, there is no executioner," which means that as long as no one takes offense or actively presses charges against an illegal activity, there is no punishment. Here, the activity was only unethical by academic standards, not illegal in a juristic sense. But the committees were the initial judges, so two of the involved politicians thought that they had no right to turn into "executioners" after not completely fulfilling their roles as judges. This qualifies as bad faith because saying that the committees could have failed them back then is indirectly a pledge of guilt. The politicians thought along these lines: There was something wrong, it was not detected, it was not immediately punished, so why is it punished now? If the dissertation appeared correct initially, it must have been correct. That was self-deception at work.

Another foundation for my discussion is John Dewey's work on community in *The Public and its Problems*. He opens with the old statement that "the cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy" (Dewey 144), even though it often means that there is more of the same instead of new concepts that actually increase the influence of the public on politics. Some of his other statements are also often forgotten in today's political world: Government exists to serve its community (146). Very often, government

only serves its own purposes.

Dewey puts emphasis on belonging to a social group and utilizing the available means of communication to enrich public life. He describes habits as being typically human, and habits are usually formed within a group (159). The only problem is that habits often keep an existing system in place and prevent reform. Thinking itself can become a habit (160). Dewey's references to science as a rigid system of established structures follows along these lines of thinking as a habit, but I think the relation to politics is not as clear as Dewey would like it to be. While he is talking about education and a general public that is detached from scientific discourse, it is not education alone that will solve the problems of democracy. You do not have to be well educated to become a politician, even though it makes things easier. Charisma and the ability to relate to people are far more important. But knowledge has to be publicly shared, in that I agree with Dewey. Ultimately, human beings are individuals, but at the same time they always belong to some type of community as well. Even if they are part of a minority, then they belong to that minority. Social and political agency emerges from the neighborly community, as Dewey puts it (218).

Universities are communities as well. The question is always how far they are involved in politics. To say that universities are entirely apolitical, even if they are private institutions, would be incorrect. Every institution of higher learning has at least two goals it shares with others: to attract as many students as possible, and to make enough money to cover expenses, pay wages, and improve facilities. This is separate from any money that intercollegiate sports can bring in. Private institutions have an even bigger motivation to make money because they receive no funding from state governments. In order to

reach these two goals, every university has to streamline its educational and public profile in a way that appears inviting, but also selective enough to appear competitive. The available facilities and workforce already limit the amount of students a school can admit, so each institution applies different criteria when it comes to admitting new students. Guidelines and strategic directions for communication are only small parts of the bigger picture. How does a university that follows an agenda of any kind react to transgressions? The difference between American and German universities is the amount of government funding. With very few exceptions, all German universities and schools of applied sciences are publicly funded and charge undergraduates a very low amount per semester (usually under 500 Euros) not to cover tuition, but for social security, public transportation, and health insurance. Doctoral students are usually not funded as well as in the United States, though. Guttenberg, Chatzimarkakis and Koch-Mehrin all had a significant income from their work as members of parliament, not to mention that Guttenberg's family is one of the wealthiest in Bavaria. In the plagiarism cases discussed here, this is one of the reasons why there was no "benefit of the doubt". However, personal conduct unrelated to academics or job duties and legal trouble in other areas (such as driving under the influence) in most cases will not lead to a university taking action. If the community took so long to find out, what, then, made these cases of plagiarism possible? It might have been a combination of arrogance by the politicians who were involved, ignorance by the committees, a false sense of trust and a lack of mistrust. The whole scandal shows that in today's society, no sphere is safe from unethical behavior, and a surprise inquiry can lead to unexpected consequences. It brought down a minister and two former picture book politicians that had been among the

more popular members of their own party. If anything emerged from the event as important or defining for the future, then it is this: The general public hates cheaters, maybe even more so than the academic community does. Guttenberg, Koch-Mehrin and Chatzimarkakis underestimated that fact.

As a final piece for analysis, let us take a look at a commentary by *The Business Spectator*:

The Guttenbergs' private wealth is estimated around half a billion euros. His glamorous wife Stephanie, née Countess of Bismarck-Schönhausen, is a great-great-granddaughter of the Iron Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, the founder of the German Empire.

Guttenberg had always used his elevated social position to claim that he was not in the business of politics for either power or money. There was an underlying message: Because he could afford to quit any day he would use his personal independence to speak his mind and bring a sense of honour and honesty into politics. Thus he would be a politician for people who had lost faith in politics.

This façade of honourability has now cracked faster than you could say all of Guttenberg's ten given names. The reason is not only that he was caught cheating but that his own behaviour has revealed a personality built on deception. He suddenly looks like a very ordinary politician.

[...]

The unexpected revelations triggered a closer look into Guttenberg's other claims about his life. His assertion that he had worked in Frankfurt and New York? True, but only if you count internships. His statement that he was a journalist with a leading German newspaper before he became an MP? Yes, but he only managed to publish a handful of short articles under his name. His insistence that he had gained business experience in his family's company? Perhaps, but this company's only task was managing the family fortune. (The Business Spectator, March 1, 2011)

“A personality built on deception” is one of the harshest elements of this commentary. But judging from what has occurred, it is a legitimate assessment of Guttenberg's personality. No matter how sound the decisions were that he made in office, how could he have possibly hoped to keep his credibility after these revelations? He even saw his renouncing of his PhD based on his own decision as a signal for honesty in academics. Even though some people wanted to keep him, there was no way he could stay a minister. It is hard to imagine any other kind of deception that, when revealed so suddenly and surprisingly, could do similar damage to a person's ethos. A doctor who never studied medicine? Unlikely. A mechanic who knows nothing about engines and the technology of a car? Even more unlikely, since the first customer with some knowledge of his or her own could ask some simple questions that would bring the truth to light. Deception only works when there is no one to question it, which is why these politicians' mistakes went unnoticed for a long time until the internet allowed a crowdsourcing for the analysis of their dissertations.

Readers, Publics, and Anguish

In *What is Literature*, Sartre talks about writers and their audiences several times. One of the relevant passages for the case study in this chapter is this one: “At first sight, there doesn’t seem to be any doubt: one writes for the universal reader, and we have seen, in effect, that the exigency of the writer is, as a rule, addressed to all men.” (Sartre *Literature*, 61) Dissertations are usually written for a very specific audience – first of all, the dissertation committee, and then a wider audience if the dissertation ends up getting published. For publication, there are often significant changes to the content or organizational structure in order to make a potential book or several individual articles look more appealing to a publisher. Very few dissertations are published in the same format that was inspected and evaluated by the committee. Furthermore, not many published dissertations find a broad readership outside of academic circles. Deborah Tannen and David Crystal are two famous exceptions. Both made Linguistics more interesting and relevant to broader audiences by applying its techniques to situations of everyday life, but a very specialized dissertation like Guttenberg’s was rarely read outside of his field of study. In addition to that, he did not opt for an academic career, but decided to become a politician, so his dissertation had no big relevance for academics in teaching or research positions. As Sartre points out, “Thus, all works of the mind contain within themselves the image of the reader for whom they are intended.” (Sartre *Literature*, 65). The intended readers were primarily the dissertation committee members. Only suspicions of plagiarism were motivation for non-specialists to examine Guttenberg’s dissertation and the ones of his peers more closely.

Most current freshman composition classes include some form of “public turn” assignment, where the students need to convert their paper into a format that can be publicly presented, such as a presentation, a song, a poem, or a work of art (remediation). Most of their works remain in the context of the classroom, though, and are not seen or evaluated by outsiders off campus. Still, presenting the paper to other students in the same class and to the instructor opens up the material for criticism and reflection. We never know who might read a certain piece of writing in a different context one day – even papers that are submitted in the portfolio and never looked at again after the class is over and the final grades are submitted could be used as a writing sample for an application, for example – maybe for a job as a journalist, maybe for an online editing position, maybe for something completely unrelated. Writing is a part of most higher-paid positions, if we do not count construction work or other types of manual labor. But even there, reports and analyses are sometimes required. An original paper without any plagiarized passages can be presented to the public eye and does not need to fear criticism. This is something students can learn to appreciate.

Anguish is a part of making ethical decisions, but according to Sartre, it is also a part of writing. He states that “in unstable societies, when the public exists on several social levels, that the writer, torn and dissatisfied, invents explanations for his anguish.” (Sartre *Literature*, 87) Guttenberg argued that he was under a lot of stress during the writing of his dissertation, and that it led to mistakes which were not intentional, but resulted in instances of plagiarism. Can this be classified as anguish? A country does not have to be an unstable society to have a public that exists on several social levels. Most

industrial nations of the western world have an upper class, a middle class, a working class, and a low-income class. Being a part of one of them and writing for one of the others is among the challenges that Sartre describes. Are we able to overcome our privileged bourgeois upbringing when we try to be political activists for the lower classes, for example? In Guttenberg's case, was he able to write a mistake-free dissertation while at the same time being a member of parliament and a young father? As we know, anguish is closely related to bad faith. In order to free themselves from anguish, some people opt for bad faith, which gives them a justification for doing something morally wrong as long as it is not discovered. Looking for excuses elsewhere, like saying if the committee let them pass then the fault is with the committee, is a classic example of bad faith. So is blaming certain citation techniques that Chatzimarkakis claimed to have been taught at Oxford. Different citation formats are not an excuse for not clearly identifying passages from other authors. Overall, the cases of these politicians are unique in a way that they caused no immediate damage to someone else, only to their own reputation. Neither of them was aiming for an academic career, so plagiarizing parts of their dissertation did not steal research results from other people in the field. It was merely a way of padding their dissertations. The challenge that comes with being a writer, with assuming any form of public availability of one's work, lies in balancing and mediating anguish and bad faith in a way that leads to good faith and does not result in self-deception. The writing process, even for collaborative works, is marked by isolation and seclusion, to put it in a somewhat poetical way. Even a co-written article or book rarely comes into being by both writers being in the same room with each other during the writing process. The time when the finished product becomes publicly available is

also when the scrutiny and critique starts. There are examples of authors like Franz Kafka, who initially ordered his best friend (Max Brod) to burn all his unpublished manuscripts (the majority of his work) after he died. Brod did not do it and tried his best to make Kafka's works available to a potential readership, so Kafka became established as an author long after his death. Kafka's writing was full of anguish, and he was also a psychologically unstable person, but the act of writing was self-therapy for him.

Existentialism is a highly psychological philosophy, and I argue that writing is just as much a psychological process as it is an intellectual one. Some will see the finished product only as an expression of logos, which it is not. Academic writing, especially in the First-Year English classroom, is an encounter with the unknown. Students will only have a vague idea of what scholarly writing is and how to approach it. A lack of familiarity with the material is one of the reasons why there are so many instances of patchwriting. Most students try to incorporate the source material into their own writing, but fail in doing so because they have only had elementary training in paraphrasing and summary. Part of anguish is uneasiness about any new kind of task or decision that needs to be approached. Students often have to make a decision about trying to patchwrite and turn in a paper that looks finished or to either go to the writing center of their university and seek help with their writing or meet with the instructor directly. Most students see talking to the instructor as a last resort because it involves admitting to having problems, and many fear that it will make them look incompetent and might negatively affect their grade. Despite instructors' best efforts to ensure students that they are always welcome to seek help during office hours, some students still never talk to their instructor about problems with their papers. These students are the most likely to plagiarize and thus react

to their anguish in bad faith. A possible solution could be to tell students that seeking help is acting in good faith. It is fine to try writing a paper without any input from others, but help is available, and the people who are able to help are held to the same standards as everyone else – they are not allowed to write the paper for the student, and they are also not allowed to do a complete revision without any work done by the student. They usually point out things that need to be changed, but they do not make the changes. A case where we see the mechanisms of bad faith at work is described by Stefan Senders. In one of his classes, he encountered a number of plagiarized papers about George Orwell's *1984*. One student's reaction is a perfect example of anguish leading to bad faith:

One student, though, walked in my door, sat down, looked at the floor and said: 'I did it. You were talking about me, right?' And it was true. We talked for a while. Why had he done it? He told me that he was stressed-out. He had been having trouble with his girlfriend. Some of his family members were sick. His team had been taking a lot of his time, and his courses had all somehow gotten backed up. He apologized and wondered what would happen. I told him to go, directly, to the deans. (Senders 200-201)

We can see anguish on several levels, both personal and related to academics. The student's coursework had been pushed into the background, and as an easy way out of anguish, the student opted for bad faith, which in turn led to plagiarism. Like many other authors, Senders stresses that there is not a singular definition of plagiarism:

From a legalistic perspective, plagiarism has a slippery quality, shifting as it does from theft to defamation to fraud to passing off. From a social analytic perspective, however, it's much easier to assess. First, plagiarism is not simply an

act, it is a categorical designation for a range of *relationships*, all of which center on a subjective sense of transgression. Only by analyzing the way the relationship of plagiarism takes shape can we say whether it is best fit by paradigms of ‘theft’, ‘fraud’, ‘infidelity’, or even excessive intimacy. (Senders 205)

Students are not always “stealing” from other authors. Sometimes plagiarism is an expression of a student’s own insecurity, and this is anguish in its most elementary form. Pedagogy first needs to respond to students’ literary insecurities and mental uneasiness about sources for a paper. One of the goals of composition instruction is to familiarize students with the conventions of academic writing. This can only be successful if instructors are able to make students feel comfortable with the use of sources, which is one of the reasons why many composition classes now feature information literacy components. Another option, though, is to address the psychological aspect of writing more by asking questions like: How did you feel when you first heard the topic of your paper? How do you feel about the primary text? Did you have any problems using additional sources for your paper? Do you think that you followed citation rules correctly? Could one of your paragraphs possibly be regarded as plagiarism? Why or why not? These are just some ideas for self-reflection. Most of these issues are only addressed in peer review activities by another student. Having students write an individual reflection about their writing process can definitely help to identify possible problems in their writing, as long as they know what anguish is and how it can lead to bad faith.

As Davis et al. point out,

... cheating is a natural or endemic part of schooling. Because those involved in the process of education are human, there will always exist the necessity of

dealing with individuals who choose to 'cheat' the system by finding ways to get around the requirements or rules. Some may argue, in fact, that that the purpose of schooling is not to rid the system of cheaters, but to work with the students to correct their deviant, yet normal, juvenile behavior. (Davis et al. 53)

This brings up an interesting aspect of cheating. Do teachers need cheaters to stay alert? If everyone followed the rules of the class or academic community in general, would we lose a certain “edge” that we keep sharp by being watchful in terms of academic dishonesty? This passage also seems to imply that it is also meaningful to teach a cheating student a lesson to make sure he or she does not repeat the offense. Younger cheaters do not need to be dismissed or expelled after their first and maybe minor offense. The politicians (all of them middle-aged adults at the time they cheated) were dishonest on the highest level of academic writing and still tried to justify their behavior by pointing out it was not originally detected. What other lesson could these politicians learn but the reality of a falsely acquired PhD?

Whitley and Keith-Spiegel provide a list of possible justifications that students use to explain their cheating:

One justification is that academic dishonesty is permissible because, even if it is a crime, it is victimless because it hurts no one. Another justification is that a specific act of dishonesty is trivial because it does not affect one's grade in an important assignment or course. Some students claim that academic dishonesty is justifiable on the grounds that professors do not care about students, so why should students care about what is important to professors? Finally, students may seem academic dishonesty as justified because society's leaders model unethical

behavior, academic dishonesty is the norm at their institution, or faculty members tolerate it. (Whitley and Keith-Spiegel 25)

The arguments here are widely known. There is no direct victim, especially if the student paper has no chance of ever being read outside of the class for which it was written. The argument of no influence on the grade is mostly wrong, though – a severe offense often leads to an F for the class, if not expulsion from the university. With a failing grade, the student already loses time and money towards the degree. The argument that mutual ignorance invites cheating might be a valid one in large lecture classes with hundreds of students and not much interaction between professor and students. Politicians or athletes being bad role models is also a valid point – which the German politicians proved in this case. They cheated to get ahead and secure employment or other career options after their terms in parliament or time in the cabinet were over. Ultimately, the anguish involved is similar to what German driving school instructors tend to tell their newly minted license holders after passing the practical exam. It often sounds like this: “You will soon notice how badly some other people drive and how they ignore the rules and even break them. Do not be discouraged and think that you should do the same because they do it. Be a responsible driver and give a positive example. If more people did it, the roads would be much safer already.” Encouraging students to not give in to anguish leading to bad faith is a start. With less students deciding to cheat, the culture of dishonesty will slowly change. One of the challenges is pointing out the rewards of honest behavior, such as true knowledge of the subject or a genuine learning experience with a topic previously unknown to the student.

Interestingly, one year later, in May 2012, another minister was under scrutiny for mistakes in her dissertation: The German federal minister of education, Annette Schavan. After her dissertation (from 1980) was looked at on the internet using a similar platform to Guttenberg's, Koch-Mehrin's, and Chatzimarkakis's cases, her university, the University of Düsseldorf, decided to revoke her PhD in January of 2013. For a minister of education, a plagiarized dissertation is even more damaging to the credibility, so Schavan decided to resign from her office in February of 2013. This was the last known case of a German politician with a plagiarized dissertation to this day.

Chapter 3: Sartre and the Ethics of Service Learning

This case study looks at service learning and its problems with creating social and ethical awareness through the encounter with the Other.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre states: “There is a relation of the for-itself with the in-itself *in the presence of the Other* (Sartre *Being*, 472). Reflective consciousness means that we are aware of ourselves because we are acknowledged by others. The development of the for-itself outwards is what Sartre calls a “flight toward”. He specifies: “Thus the for-itself is both a flight and a pursuit; it flees the in-itself and at the same time pursues it.” (ibid.) I talked about the relations between in-itself and for-itself earlier. We are what we are based on the in-itself, but we become what we are for others in the for-itself, which is our outward manifestation of our personality. Sartre goes into more detail when he explains the ways we encounter the Other: “For the Other I am irremediably what I am, and my very freedom is a given characteristic of my being” (Sartre *Being*, 473). We can not change what we are in the eyes of others. We may be different from the way they perceive us, but once their perception is locked into a certain mode, that mode pertains. This is explained further: “First – the Other looks at me and as such he holds the secret of my being, he knows what I am. Thus the profound meaning of my being is outside of me, imprisoned in an absence. The Other has the advantage over me.” (Sartre

Being, 473). As a result, “I am possessed by the Other; the Other's look fashions my body in its nakedness, causes it to be born, sculptures it, produces it as it *is*, sees it as I shall never see it. The Other holds a secret – the secret of what I am” (Sartre *Being*, 475). We become what we are only in the presence of the Other because the Other acknowledges our existence. As such, the Other sees us in a way we can never see ourselves. In terms of indifference towards others, Sartre calls this a blindness: “I am my own blindness with regard to others, and this blindness includes an implicit comprehension of being-for-others; that is, of the Other's transcendence as a look. This comprehension is simply what I myself determine to hide from myself” (Sartre *Being*, 495). This means that we can choose to turn a “blind eye” towards the Other and, as Sartre points out, see the Other not as a person, but as a function. His examples include a ticket collector in the subway and a cafe waiter (*ibid.*) who would be reduced to just their functions of collecting tickets or serving customers. All other qualities we can choose to hide from ourselves so we do not perceive them anymore. A common example is the tendency physicians at hospitals have to reduce patients to their illness rather than associate a name with them. They often talk about “the broken leg in room 500” or “the collapsed lung from room 510”, thus depersonalizing the patients in an attempt to not develop an emotional bond with any of them. Television news also has a tendency to simplify things, as in saying “Moscow has not yet released a statement about the recent terrorist attack in Russia.” This way, the Russian government is reduced to the mere name of the country's capital, avoiding the identification with any particular Russian politician who could have released a statement.

Service Learning and the Composition Classroom

Joseph Kahne and Joel Westheimer identify three domains of service learning – the moral, political, and intellectual domain (Kahne and Westheimer 595). As they point out, in the moral domain, service learning activities tend toward two types of relationships. Relationships that emphasize charity we will call 'giving'. Those that aim primarily to deepen relationships and to forge new connections we will call 'caring'. In caring relationships, Nel Noddings asserts, we try to consider the life and disposition of those for whom we are caring. We attempt to 'apprehend the reality of the other' and then 'to struggle [for progress] together.' In doing so, we create opportunities for changing our understanding of the other and the context within which he or she lives. (595)

We said that we can not change the way the other perceives us, but the other can change his or her view on his or her own under the influence of certain factors. In a service learning context, both the student participants and their subjects are others. They occupy different spaces within society, and a change in perspective could affect both groups and not just one of them.

The political domain has two components. Charity is realized as civic duty:

“Volunteerism and compassion for the less fortunate are the undergirding conceptions of political socialization associated with this vision” (595). Change is manifested as social reconstruction: “...critical reflection about social policies and conditions, the acquisition of skills of political participation, and the formation of social bonds” (595). This even

applies to charity work done by fraternities and sororities, which in its leadership requirements also asks for a massive involvement on the side of the students.

The intellectual domain is split into additive experience for charity and transformative experience for change (595). In a writing context, it is safe to say that instructors look for a transformative experience. An additive experience can be seen as merely enrichment, whereas a transformative experience is supposed to give students an entirely new perspective of social issues.

In their article “Writing as Students, Writing as Citizens”, Thomas Deans and Nora Bacon list the characteristics of college writing: “writing as a vehicle of reflection and action, writing as audience-directed, active and collaborative learning strategies, a process approach, and social and developmental goals” (Deans and Bacon 127). The concept of audience is an important one, as well as the collaborative component (peer review, group work, etc.) and the process approach which “involves planning, drafting, revising, and editing” (127). The teaching of writing as a process is a common method in many first-year English classes in the United States. Furthermore, the authors describe the different goals of composition classes: “composition as initiation to academic discourse, composition as response to a variety of literary genres, composition as a place for personal inquiry and creative nonfiction, composition as cultural studies or critical pedagogy, and composition as introduction to argument” (127-128). Not all components are always part of a class syllabus. Usually, a class serves either as exposure to different genres or as a space for personal inquiry, and in a later stage either as critical pedagogy or introduction to argument. A class that incorporates all of the listed items would be too

packed with material to treat any of it in depth. Most universities split first-year writing into two separate classes, one for writing practice and exposure to different genres, and another one for expository writing and introduction to argument. When it comes to writing as a product of service learning, though, there are only three major approaches: “writing about the community, writing for the community, and writing with the community” (128). The paradigms each become more intense and time-consuming. Writing about the community is the easiest approach. The students just describe their experiences and encounters in papers and reports. Writing for the community is almost comparable to an internship as a writer for a charity or some other non-profit organization. It involves learning the standards of writing within that organization and requires supervision from more experienced writers in the respective field. Writing with the community is the most difficult approach. It requires “direct collaboration of students and local citizens” (128).

The transformational experience component of service learning is addressed by Janet Eyler and Dwight Giles. They describe the ultimate goal this way:

Service-learning practitioners tend to come down on the side of transformational learning, supporting education that raises fundamental questions and empowers students to do something about them. Many believe that the essence of effective service-learning is in moving students beyond charity to active, committed citizenship. They hope that students will move beyond handing out cans of food to becoming actively engaged in long-term community problem solving. (Eyler and Giles 132)

This description is in line with Kahne and Westheimer's intellectual domain. The transformative experience is seen as the key component here, ultimately leading students to develop an increased awareness of social issues and to engage in improving problematic conditions. This effect is not automatic, though. As Eyler and Giles point out, “not all learning is transformative” (133). There are limitations: “Transformational learning only occurs as we struggle to solve a problem where our usual ways of doing or seeing do not work, and we are called to question the validity of what we think we know or critically examine the very premises of our perception of the problem” (133). The ideal outcome of this effect is what the authors call “perspective transformation” (135), but they admit it rarely occurs from service learning alone. The attempt involves making students feel uncomfortable on purpose. Eyler and Giles call this a “disorienting dilemma” (141). It means that students are challenged to leave their personal comfort zone and are confronted with something they did not expect, something they have never done before, or something they do not immediately understand. As they come to terms with these new situations and conditions, a transformational learning effect is possible. Leaving the comfort zone is also not without its dangers. As Barbara Jacoby illustrates, it comes with a variety of challenges, too:

Viewing students as able participants in their own development means that we must be careful to respect and support students' current realities. This includes facing the fact that some white students have never before been asked to examine their own racial identities and privileges or to confront their stereotypes. However, it is important to note that talking about inequality, racism, sexism, and poverty can be overwhelming for anyone, particularly young people who have not been

exposed to these issues before. It can come as a shock for students of privilege to come to grips for the first time with the idea that their families, communities, and institutions may, in some ways, contribute to and perpetuate these problems.

(Jacoby 233)

The white male privilege is frequently observed in the United States. Most students are not even directly aware of it until they see it at work in an unfamiliar environment. The effect of the disorienting dilemma may be weakened by preparation, but in some cases, it is the instructor's duty to make students aware of certain societal structures and mechanisms before they depart for the site of their service, in particular if it is a freshman class. In her article "Service-Learning as Crucible", Lori Pompa also describes the social change effects that Kahne and Westheimer talk about:

Different from charity, service-learning involves a critique of social systems, challenging participants to analyze what they experience, while inspiring them to take action and make change. Transformative events radically shift how we see things. The lens through which we previously had viewed reality is irrevocably altered. It is not just about looking at particular issues from another angle; often, an experience of this kind completely changes the perspective from which one now sees all of life. Thus, service-learning provides both an incubator for and impetus toward social change. (Pompa 189)

Her project involved students spending time visiting prison inmates at two different correctional facilities close to Temple University in Philadelphia. It is definitely a good example for leaving the comfort zone. The students involved in the project had never seen a prison from the inside. Pompa called her class project "Inside Out" (Pompa 174)

for several reasons, one of them being the fact that students get “behind the walls” (174) and then take their experiences outside with them to write about them.

Challenges to Service Learning

The encounter with the Other is one of the central ideas of service learning, which has been a popular method in freshman composition classes at many universities in the United States. It has not been without its critics, though. In Bruce Herzberg's essay “Community Service and Critical Teaching,” Herzberg talks about his own approach to service learning in one of his classes. As the main objective of the class, the students “learned to be adult literacy tutors and went weekly to a shelter in Boston to offer their help” (Herzberg 307). He is optimistic about the general outcomes of the class:

There is a good deal of evidence from our program that service learning generates a social conscience, if by that we understand a sense of the reality and immediacy of the problems of the poor and homeless along with a belief that people in a position to help out should do so. Students report that their fears and prejudices diminish or disappear, that they are moved by the experience of helping others, and that they feel a commitment to help more. (Herzberg 308)

This is the ideal outcome. On the other hand, a conversation overheard by one of Herzberg's colleagues between two students had one give advice to the other concerning writing about the experience: “No sweat. Write that before you went, you had no sympathy for the homeless, but the visit to the shelter opened your eyes. Easy A.” (309) This is the worst possible outcome, a fake social conscience and no critical reflection

about the encounter with the other. Some students just write what they think their instructor wants to hear. The instructor has no method of finding out if a student's response was a honest or just written to satisfy expectations. Herzberg even limits the goals of the class: "We do not set out to study teaching methods or composition pedagogy" (310). With this limited methodical approach, students cannot possibly be effective teachers, but they have to make the best out of the limited teaching experience they may or may not have. The ultimate goal is to make students "better citizens, citizens in the strongest sense of those who take responsibility for the communal welfare" (317). A transformational experience is the ideal outcome, but often it is not achieved.

Herzberg also lists a number of things that can go wrong and have gone wrong when students do not truly identify with the ethical foundations of service learning. The first main component of Herzberg's evaluation concerns social conscience: "Questions about social structures, ideology, and social justice are not automatically raised by community service" (Herzberg 309). Of course we want students to develop a social conscience. Many students come from rich families and have never really seen poverty in their lives. The age where they start college (usually around 18) is an ideal threshold to maturity both intellectually and in the development of their brains. The question we need to ask is how we can justify sending them into walks of life they know nothing about. Downtown major American cities, different rules apply after hours and after dark. People get mugged at gunpoint, homeless people roll up in their blankets, drug dealers go about their business. Especially Chicago and New York have some of the highest murder rates in the United States. Washington, D.C. is up there, too, in violent crime statistics. What

good does community service do if it is not done voluntarily? You also cannot convert people to Christianity if they don't want to go to church or do not like organized religion in general.

Another argument is related to the setting of Herzberg's service-learning project, a homeless shelter. In his article, he says that most of his students “had done some volunteer work before, but not in settings like that” (310). It is one thing to look after kids in a church nursery or to help with the annual soup cookout, but tutoring people at a homeless shelter is rough. If students do not have a tutoring background at all, it is even harder. Being literate and well-educated alone does not make you a great teacher. The problem lies in the multitude of different issues that the homeless people in the shelter deal with and to which the tutors need to respond: “The learners’ needs are various: Some are almost completely illiterate, some are schizophrenic, a few need ESL teaching, some read well but need help with higher-order skills” (Herzberg 312). Do undergraduate students, especially the ones whose major is not Education or English, really have the skills to tutor people with such diverse needs? Who do we think we are to demand something of students (sometimes Freshmen!) to do the kind of work that special education teachers sometimes need a Master's degree for? It is arrogance and the notion that any community service is good community service. We have an easier time sending students into retirement homes to talk to the people who live there and maybe collect their stories by recording them. No real harm is likely to be done. Most retirees are happy to be able to talk to a student. Not all have relatives that visit them regularly, and the anecdotes from the past and sometimes peculiar character traits of retirees are often interesting and even charming for students. The problem is that such an assignment

would not count as a transformative experience because the people involved are generally better off financially and are not members of the fringes of society. Whoever can afford living at a retirement home has some money, or the younger family members are paying for the person's stay. Either way, they may be unfortunate in being alone where they are, but they are not unfortunate regarding their socioeconomic status in the same way as a homeless person.

In addition to that, when we see service learning as an enriching experience that helps in making students more well-rounded as individuals and parts of society, we often assume too much. We should not “mistake the rhetoric of good intentions for historical reality” (Colin Greer quoted by Herzberg, 314). As St. Bernard said, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. We try to turn students into responsible, educated, respectful adults while at the same time preparing them for a professional career, but can we really do all that at once? Freshman composition should teach students how to write and how to argue ethically. They should also learn citation formats and the standards of the academy. We do not need to add feminism, legalization of certain recreational drugs, or immigration reform to the mix. Of course we can, but a themed class is very limited in letting students find their own voice. I think the good intentions can be seen as seriousness. We try to teach students values through service, but not every student has the personality to respond to the task with the same mindset as other students. Seriousness assumes that certain values are absolute. What is the value of one type of service compared to another, then, as in homeless shelters vs. retirement homes as the sites of operation? Which experience is more effective or more productive?

Another problem with the project stems from the still very widely spread belief that the American Dream is for everyone and effort alone can lead to the realization of personal goals. Some Americans still believe in the old adage: “If you strive for what you want, you can receive it” (Knoblauch quoted by Herzberg, 315). The reality is different. Children who grow up in an illiterate household or just a household with little to no access to books will be at a severe disadvantage once they enter the public school system. Chances are that their neighborhoods will not have good schools, either. Nothing is further from the truth than to say that the American Dream is for everyone. It never was, and it never will be. The times where people could go from dishwasher to millionaire are over. Of course people can still become wealthy with a business idea or a technical patent, but the road towards it is much longer and rougher than when the nation was still young. Social background and parental income often determine the careers of children long before they even start elementary school. Again, this is seriousness. We have never seen a bigger divide between the 1% of the American population with the most financial resources and the 99% of the rest of the population. Current plans to further push charter schools and privatize education show a lack of trust in public schools.

Instructors often expect students to have an awakening of sorts when they encounter the other through service learning. This effect can be very slow to achieve, though, and sometimes it is not as strong as intended: “The community service experience doesn’t bring an epiphany of critical consciousness – or even, necessarily, an epiphany of conscience. The effect was slow and indirect” (Herzberg 315).

It is a lot to ask students to have an “epiphany”, which is a biblical term for the

appearance of the star of Bethlehem. If we know one thing from years of research and experience, then it's the fact that learning takes time and often students take all the way until their senior year to finally see their path in life. Consciousness is a very broad term. Many students are conscious of racism and discrimination, but would they speak up if a girl in a headscarf or full burka is walking through a hot summer and is laughed at by some drunk fraternity members? We know it happens. What we can teach is solidarity – the concept that we are all “in this together”. As instructors, we are as much a part of the university's culture as the students are. And a common German saying is that even a professor stays a student for the rest of his life. Research means learning and discovering new things, too. In his opinion piece “Writing for the Public” from 2010, Mike Rose offers an interesting perspective for the limitations of academic writing:

We academics easily develop a tin ear to the sound of our own language. We talk too much to each other, and not beyond. We risk linguistic, intellectual, and political isolation. Many good things have come of rhetoric and composition's move toward disciplinary status. But with disciplinarity also comes a turn inward, a concentration on the mechanics of the profession, on internal debates and intellectual display, on a specific kind of career building – and it is all powerfully reinforced, materially and symbolically, by the academy. (Rose 291)

Rose is talking about the notion of the “ivory tower” here – a university that is secluded and separate from the “real world.” Similar to the echo chamber of social media, academics also run the risk of talking too much to members of their own circles and thus losing touch with people who are outsiders. The academy is meant to be the intellectual elite. When this status causes hubris or conceit, it is time to turn things around and get in

touch with the outside world again. This is a benefit of the public turn that was not yet mentioned. As Sartre says, we write for the eyes of all. Why not open ourselves up to criticism from the outside? Most scholarly articles are only read by a very limited and specialized audience. The same can be said about monographs. It is rare to find one's way to a broad readership as an academic. Some professors have turned to the writing of novels to reach a different audience, like Brandon Sanderson, who teaches at the University of Utah. As Rose further explains, a different mindset or mentality would likely have to start with rhetoric and composition:

The field of rhetoric and composition is grounded on the art of persuasion, is multidisciplinary, and has a foundational connection to teaching practice and education policy. It is the ideal place, as a number of people have been arguing lately, to imagine a different kind of disciplinary and institutional life. We could begin in our graduate programs. (Rose 291)

Rose suggests a class in public writing, what he calls "the *doing* of rhetoric" (Rose 292). This could be an option for training students to write publicly. Rose is aware of the limitations of academic writing and provides a valid counter-perspective to Herzberg.

Blindness and the Other in Service Learning

The point of tutoring is that the learners benefit from the tutors, not the other way around. What is the point of service learning through tutoring homeless people if the main goal consists of creating a social conscience?

The problem with this approach lies in Sartre's concept of blindness towards the Other.

The students are very likely to see the homeless people they are tutoring as people that need additional instruction. The different reasons for this need are often ignored and pushed into the background. In the most common scenario, the tutors would probably learn more than the people who are being tutored, especially if it is only for a limited time (which is very likely as part of a class). Students have neither time nor training to look deeper into the personal background of a homeless person, find out what caused the person to end up in this state, and see the homeless person as the Other with all of his or her individual characteristics that make the person unique. Sartre states that “unity with the Other is ... *in fact* unrealizable” (Sartre *Being*, 477) because it “would necessarily involve the disappearance of the characteristics of otherness in the Other” (477). No matter what we do in the encounter with the Other, we “*act upon the Other's freedom*” (477, emphasis in original). How much students do that depends on their dedication to the cause of the individual service learning project. Of course they act upon the Other's freedom, but the result is to be positive in causing a transformation within the student's perspective of homelessness or other social problems. It would be both bad faith and seriousness for a student to assume that just writing what the instructor wants to see is the way to an easy A. It is bad faith because the student does not show a genuine response to the intended disorientation, but a formulaic and predetermined one. The student deceives him- or herself by writing a response that fits the course agenda and the instructor's expectations. The student's true opinion or reaction remains in the dark and could be the opposite of what was written in the paper. Seriousness is involved because of the importance of getting an A in the class. It is seen as a value, and, as such, is subject to humans making it a value. The true value of the encounter with the Other is a learning

experience, an ethical reaction, and a broadening of moral horizons. Getting an A is the least important component of a service learning class, yet seriousness makes it the most important one because it is important to students taking the class.

The existence of illiteracy is a far too simple explanation for homelessness. Some homeless people are mentally ill, some are addicted to drugs, but others were just victims of circumstance.

Again, the danger lies in a simplification of the problem of homelessness. A common reasoning that students use involves homeless people being less educated than the majority of Americans. If they dropped out of high school, for example, they were not very likely to find a well-paying job and at some point ended up homeless. A similar reason could be drug abuse – at some point, a person was no longer able to pay for his or her addiction and ended up selling all property until ending up on the street. Some people may have had a low socioeconomic status right from the start. This often makes it impossible to attend a university and gain the kind of education that is necessary to obtain a decent occupation. If additional factors like mental illness, lack of proper health insurance, or drug abuse come into play, there are very few safeguards in place that would allow a person to stay a productive member of society with decent living conditions.

Service learning also aims at encouraging students to make the world a better place: “Developing a social imagination makes it possible not only to question and analyze the world, but also to imagine transforming it” (Herzberg 317). This is a noble goal, but it might well only be possible for students who intend to do social work, want to become

nurses or physicians, or pastors. Other professions subscribe to the capitalist worldview and are primarily intended to make money. Is there a point in forcing service learning on these majors? This is about learning about the Other and realizing what makes the Other different from oneself. What measures must be taken to make the Other more like oneself instead of different? If we want to fight homelessness, we must give homeless people the tools they need to be successful in this world, to find employment and shelter, and to give up drug use. Church programs aim at these things by providing shelter first, education second, and potential rehab programs last. College students do not have the means to provide all three of the measures that would allow a homeless person to improve his or her situation. Education is the only one, and to a very limited extent.

If we come back to Sartre here, in *Being and Nothingness*, he further describes the relationship with the Other in terms of how it touches the for-itself: “the upsurge of the Other touches the for-itself in its very heart. By the Other and for the Other the pursuing flight is fixed in itself” (Sartre *Being* 473). The flight-toward ends when the for-itself is acknowledged by the Other. It goes further than this: “I am the proof of the Other. That is the original fact. But this proof of the Other is in itself an attitude toward the Other” (474). Reflective consciousness implies that we are aware of ourselves because our existence is acknowledged by others. For example, some people tend to think that a particular city has no homelessness problems just because homeless people are nowhere to be seen in the downtown area. This could just be because they are not allowed to loiter there or because they have to stay inside at homeless shelters in the winter. The Other in this case is invisible, so it does not exist. There is a reciprocal relationship between the self and the Other: “While I attempt to free myself from the hold of the Other, the Other

is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the Other, the Other seeks to enslave me” (Sartre *Being*, 474). This can be seen as an explanation for the struggles certain students have with the problem of homelessness and its causes, sometimes simplifying the reasons to become homeless. Sartre concludes: “Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others” (475). It is when students avoid conflict that they fall into the trap of generating fake responses and generic statements about their transformational experience. I mentioned the idea of the disorienting dilemma earlier. Only when students allow themselves to become disoriented do they face a genuine conflict. When conflict is avoided, the encounter with the Other is incomplete and cannot possibly lead to a transformation. Each student's in-itself is realized as a different for-itself after the service learning experience, but only if the student embraces the encounter with the Other and allows for it to have an effect. That effect can be different for each student, but if someone is only going through the motions in his or her writing and aims at an easy A, then the purpose is missed. Most scholars of service learning would agree.

Bad Faith in Service Learning

In his book, Randy Stoecker, even though he has helped to create service learning programs for Wisconsin, describes the process of creating them very negatively:

Many are the equivalent of putting up the wall crooked, tearing it down, putting it up again, and then getting the biggest hammer you have and pounding it until it's plumb and square. And all around me I see others engaged in higher education civic engagement who don't even care if a wall gets built, let alone whether it is

quality construction. (Stoecker xii)

Service learning is not a trial-and-error method, but very often it is approached as one. Unless it is part of an ongoing initiative and the methods are thoroughly planned and designed, it does not matter if students arrive at a site at the beginning of the semester and then leave at the end. What happens while they are tutoring at a homeless shelter, for example, is subordinate to a class agenda and ultimately leads to a grade. In order to receive an A, students will most likely have to write a final paper that describes their encounter with the other and their transformation in terms of social conscience, social awareness, and understanding of minorities (which homeless people also are). What prevents a student from lying in this paper? Anyone can say that their opinion on homelessness was changed and that they now understand what it is like to be homeless and what factors can make a person end up without a home. If we want students to be honest, a mandated service learning class is not going to work as a transformative experience if students do not agree with its purpose and if they have no desire to perform the tasks that are asked of them. Of course they will most likely know the class involves a service component before they sign up for it. With few exceptions, it will be a themed class limited to either honor students or a special interest group that does not want to take a traditional class. Let us assume it is the equivalent of ENGL 102 at University of South Carolina, which is the second part of the Freshman English sequence and is titled “Rhetoric and Composition”. The class will still include an introduction to the basic concepts of rhetoric (rhetorical appeals, deliberative, forensic and epideictic rhetoric, logical fallacies, etc.) and how to write a research paper, but the actual written assignments will be based on the encounter through service learning. Not all students

who sign up for such a class will have the same motivation. Many required classes, no matter in which subject or major, are taken with the sole purpose of fulfilling the requirement and, if at all possible, getting an A. Service learning is not different. Minimum effort can lead to an A as well if the students write what their instructor expects them to write. We have no punishment for students who are pretending to now be socially aware or who say they now view social problems with different eyes.

Bad faith and seriousness are at work here, too. Bad faith is deceiving oneself – which we do if we think a mandated class with an encounter of the other is automatically a tool to create an ethical perspective. Seriousness means viewing certain values as absolute and universal when they are, in fact, created by humans and are, as such, entirely subject to our own moral standards. What makes homelessness a bigger problem than racism, gender inequality, homophobia or Islamophobia, for example? Why does one single aspect of social problems seem to be the key to a student’s new understanding and increased awareness? An introductory class in ethics, from an existentialist perspective, can become the foundation for further encounters with the other. Before we even take students to a new place to encounter the other, they need to become aware of what the other is.

Sartre talks about concrete relations with others also in reference to Martin Heidegger's term “Mitsein” (being-with). In Sartre's words, Mitsein is being-with-others (Sartre *Being*, 535). We are alone until we encounter a situation that makes us part of a group. Sartre's example is a café, its patrons and a sudden incident:

“I am on the pavement in front of a café; I observe the other patrons and I know myself to be observed. We remain here in the most ordinary case of conflict with

others (the Other's being-as-object for me, my being-as-object for the Other). But suddenly some incident occurs in the street; for example, a slight collision between a jeep and a taxi. Immediately at the very instant when I become a spectator of the incident, I experience my self non-thetically as engaged in “we”.

[...] “we” look at the event, “we” take part. (Sartre *Being*, 535-536)

In other words, we walk alone through this world until we witness an event that briefly unites us as “we.” Another one of Sartre's example is being a spectator in a theater (535). As part of a crowd, the individual also becomes “we” - a large number of people observes the performance on stage and is united through being witnesses of said performance. To come back to the concept of solidarity, it is important to teach students that they go into a service learning project as individuals, but their transformation should turn them all into a “we” - united in a new perspective and a deeper understanding of social problems. They turn their former, less educated, less aware state into a collective experience which unites them into a “we”. At least this is how I would interpret the effect of the learning experience. In the ideal case, a “being-with” the Other causes this transformation. Of course students cannot achieve unity with the Other, but they can achieve unity in facing the Other and being transformed by the encounter.

Existentialism, which is an atheist philosophy in Sartre’s tradition, is a very useful tool to teach ethics and moral standards. We can tell students about its limitations – but it offers far more positive aspects to evaluate actions and values. The classical dilemma of the French student in World War II is just one example. The Abraham dilemma is another one. A person stealing money from the bank that employs him is a third. Ultimately,

freedom for the sake of freedom is the core of Sartre's philosophy. But the freedom of others depends on our own.

In his paper "Does service learning have a future?" Edward Zlotkowski addresses a number of issues related to service learning in the humanities and its perceived role as a panacea for problems of civic responsibility and social conscience across the curriculum:

Literature – or at least certain kinds of literature – may indeed be a "test case" – but so are medieval history, astrophysics, differential calculus, bond markets, and hydraulic engineering. In fact, there may be no single discipline – including social work and applied ethics – that cannot and will not be seen by some of its practitioners as a "test case" of service-learning's academic relevance.

(Zlotkowski 7)

Social work and applied ethics are odd choices to question the usefulness of service learning because social work is service by definition, and field work with immersion is one of the key components to get students acquainted with their future profession, just like nursing students shadow nurses at hospitals and work as interns. Engineering would have a hard time justifying service learning components unless it was to show students that engineers can also work for non-profits (such as disaster relief in Africa). For the most part, engineers do calculations and other applied tasks related to their field. Abstract disciplines like mathematics or physics (especially theoretical physics) have little to no need for an encounter with the other. If such an encounter is important to a university's curriculum at all, it would be a better idea to design an applied ethics class based on existentialism that can be used for a variety of possible student topics. All of them can be performed in class and on campus, with the help of the internet and invited guest

speakers. My next chapter will describe a model class concept for an ethical writing class based on existentialism. The class resources would definitely involve *Existentialism is a Humanism* and relevant parts from *Being and Nothingness*. Once students are aware of bad faith, seriousness, anguish, and the concepts of being-in-itself, being-for-itself, and being-for-others, the class can go into more detail about the encounter with the other and the conflicts that arise from it. To illustrate the use of the concepts, the class can draw on a variety of current events. Some I would suggest are Donald Trump's travel ban against Muslims (the Other in terms of religion), police violence against black people (the Other in terms of ethnicity), and the intended changes to the Affordable Care Act (the Other in terms of health status and pre-existing conditions). Going back to the beginning of the chapter, Sartre states that the Other has the advantage over us (Sartre *Being*, 473). For most people, a big part of it is the fear of the unknown, and students have the same problem when they encounter new and unfamiliar situations. An introductory class in existentialist ethics can help to prepare them for these kinds of encounters and make the outcome more relevant and more authentic.

Chapter 4: A Sartrean Approach to First-Year Composition

This chapter will describe a plan for a First-Year English composition course based on key ethical concepts from Sartre. The goal of this class is to give students an insight into existentialist ethics while at the same time preparing them for ethical responses in writing, for example related to plagiarism and encountering the work of others, the ethical dimensions of conflict (political issues or conflicts in the classroom, etc.), and the encounter with the Other (through service learning or writing about marginalized communities). The course will equip students with the tools to identify the ethical choices they face as writers, to better understand ethical lapses that writers sometimes make in these situations, and to develop more generous or more ethical approaches to these issues.

This class works with Sartre's writings and selected case studies to arrive at ethical concepts. The primary materials used are *Being and Nothingness* along with *Existentialism is a Humanism*. While many composition scholars emphasize the ethical component of composition instruction, my proposed course is unique in making ethics the central focus, and using a Sartrean perspective, which I believe helps students to more effectively examine their own ethical motives related to writing.

The relevant chapters from *Being and Nothingness* are Part One, Chapter Two (Bad Faith), Part Two, Chapter One (Immediate Structures of the For-Itself), Part Three,

Chapter One (The Existence of Others), Part Three, Chapter Three (Concrete Relations with Others), and the Conclusion. *Existentialism is a Humanism* is used in its entirety. I selected the chapters based on their relevance for defining bad faith, which is an integral part of identifying ethical dilemmas. Plagiarism is an act of bad faith. Most students think that as long as they will not get caught, there is nothing wrong with it. Patchwriting is often not even realized as being wrong because students mix the work of others with their own, which gives them a false sense of doing actual research. The chapter on the for-itself helps students to understand the concept of being, which is needed for the theories about the existence of Others and relations with Others. We are aware of our own existence because it is acknowledged by others. This is one of the basic principles of reflective consciousness. But the Other also holds power over us because he sees us as what we are and not just as what we would like to be. The conclusion is one of the few places in the book where Sartre makes some statements about ethics. *Existentialism is a Humanism* is one of the most accessible pieces of Sartre's writing, and even though he himself was not very happy with it, the lecture provides a good overview of the humanistic aspects of existentialism. It includes some good examples about ethical dilemmas and situations where good faith and bad faith come into play. Very often, existentialism is seen as a cynical and pessimistic way to look at the world, but that is not the case if you take a closer look at some of its ideas. The text is effective in showing students why Sartre calls existentialism a humanism.

Looking at practical usages of the chapters, for bad faith students can be asked to recall a time when they were deceiving themselves and when they had to decide between two options that could both be seen as ethical, but had different results and consequences.

Being in-itself and for-itself can be illustrated by talking about what makes a person an individual and how that individual acts in the presence of others. The for-itself is the outward appearance we project towards others. Students can relate to different types of behavior in different social settings or not doing or saying certain things in the company of others.

Course Objective and Outline

The challenge lies in designing the class as a first-year composition class, not introductory ethics or philosophy. Each concept of Sartre's work will be accompanied by a major writing task.

This is a first-year writing class, so Sartre's philosophy will not be the focal point. Existentialism here is a means to arrive at the end of ethical concepts that are suitable for composition. The reason for this approach lies in confronting the students with the fact that ethics are an important part of writing. We have dilemmas in professional writing, where writers may have to decide between describing test results favorably for the company or being honest to benefit the customers. The ideal solution is often a compromise. Also, in politics, we increasingly see people struggle with ethical concepts. In order to argue ethically, students need some practice in ethics that a regular writing class is not always able to provide. While existentialism never developed a concrete ethical framework, its basic ideas and examples from Sartre's work provide enough material to make students aware of what is at stake when people have to decide between several options that will each have different consequences. Composition classes usually

do not teach this. They focus on training in writing, argumentation, the rhetorical appeals, logical fallacies, and the concept of audience. Ethical dimensions of writing are addressed when it comes to talking about plagiarism. Service learning classes and critical pedagogy deal with ethical ramifications, but they are often limited to just one aspect of ethical behavior (such as the problem of how a city deals with homelessness, for example).

Unit 1

The first part of the class will deal with ethical dilemmas regarding heated issues and disagreement within power differentials, beginning with a discussion of the events between Cheryl Abbate and John McAdams at Marquette University. The corresponding chapters from *Being and Nothingness* are Part One, Chapter Two (Bad Faith) and Part Two, Chapter One (Immediate Structures of the For-Itself), with an emphasis on the concept of seriousness. Students will be asked to find other conflicts of interest where neutral observers could have supported either point of view and to formulate a response based on notions of good faith, bad faith, and seriousness. Some questions to ask of students could be: “Have you ever encountered an ethical dilemma where both sides were so caught up in their problem that there was no solution? Have you been a part of such a conflict yourself? Was there a solution? Did the conflicting parties reconcile at the end? Why or why not? What methods do we have to solve ethical dilemmas based on notions of good faith, bad faith, and seriousness?” Overall, the unit points out the importance of ethical argumentation when it comes to heated arguments. It can also bring in additional cases that raise similar questions. We have controversies about protests in the NFL where

players choose to sit or kneel instead of standing for the national anthem. Opponents say it is disrespectful to the flag and the national anthem, supporters say it is an example for freedom of speech. What can be considered respectful and what is potentially offensive? Students often become aware of their own stereotypes when they start doing research on a controversial topic and are forced to deal with opposing viewpoints that show them their position is not the only one and there are other ways to look at an issue. Seriousness is closely related. Going back to the topic of NFL protests, many Americans believe that the flag and national anthem are almost sacred and need to be honored at all times. A relatively small deviation from the norm, such as sitting or kneeling during the anthem, is already seen as violating the standard of behavior. Standing up, taking off hats and caps and turning one's head to the flag during the playing of the national anthem are standards established by society and, as such, are examples of seriousness. People can choose not to accept that standard and do something else instead. Sitting or kneeling are not disrespectful by themselves, but because these actions do not fulfill the norm of accepted behavior and are consequently seen as wrong. Solidarity also means being able to identify with the protesters and the reasons for their actions.

The discussion points for the students would definitely include the public reaction and why it tends to fall in just one of two basic categories. The major writing task would be finding a different disagreement situation along power differentials in the public eye and analyzing it.

Unit 2

The plagiarism scandal involving the German politicians will be used as a case to illustrate the ethical consequences of plagiarism on the highest possible level – a dissertation. The unit itself deals with plagiarism and patchwriting in general. Students will be asked to reflect on their own writing. The most relevant chapter from *Being and Nothingness* for this unit is Part One, Chapter Two (Bad Faith), and the discussion will focus on further defining bad faith in everyday life and in situations the students will recognize. Patchwriting commonly occurs in freshman writing classes, so it will be a part of the students' writing task to think about the task they are working on, questions about the content, how they deal with their sources, how they integrate sources into their own writing, and where they see problems with avoiding plagiarism. The task would start with a self-reflection: “What was your first reaction when you saw the topic of the assignment? What was the first source of information you went to? Did you end up incorporating it into your paper? What other problems did you encounter? Do you feel that some of your writing could be seen as plagiarism? Why or why not? How did you make sure that your own voice was present in your text and you did not just echo your sources?”

Students should definitely be made aware of what patchwriting is and how to avoid it in their own writing. The goal is not just to explain what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, but also to make students aware of the psychological aspects of plagiarism. Very often, bad faith manifests itself as an “easy way out.” Especially when they are

under pressure, dealing with a deadline that does not leave much time, and commitments for other classes, students often resort to plagiarism to put a paper together at the last minute and get it to the required length. Bad faith makes students think that what they are doing is okay as long as they do not get caught. Acting in good faith involves taking the risk of getting a lower grade than anticipated (by submitting their own original work, which might not be of the highest quality) over the risk of failing the class because of cheating. Anguish needs to be faced with a response in good faith, not a response in bad faith.

As a common example for bad faith, we can also use white lies to illustrate the concept. Many times, people do not tell the truth to someone because they think that person cannot handle the truth or is better off with a lie for some reason. This is bad faith because a person assumes the lie will not be identified as such and the truth will stay secret. In most cases, the person who was told a white lie finds out about the truth eventually and would have been better off hearing the truth in the first place.

Discussion points can include the notion of truth, other examples of good faith and bad faith, and descriptions of situations where the students themselves had to make a choice between the two. A writing task could involve a description of the students' own research process for a paper topic and how to avoid plagiarism.

Unit 3

The final case study involves writing about the other, in particular issues of ethics in writing about marginalized communities. Students will be asked to read Bruce Herzberg's

text and then to think of other situations where “false generosity” and bad faith can lead to unwanted results that negate the intended positive effect of an assignment. The theoretical readings for this unit are *Existentialism is a Humanism* and three chapters from *Being and Nothingness*, namely Part Three, Chapter One (The Existence of Others), Part Three, Chapter Three (Concrete Relations with Others), and the Conclusion. The discussion will emphasize the concept of the Other and “Being-With.” Some good questions and discussion points at the beginning could be: “Have you been involved in any kind of charity or volunteer organization? What was your reason to do it, and did anyone ask you to do it or expect you to do it? Did you stop? What were your reasons, if you stopped? If you are still a part of the organization, what made you continue to keep working for it? Do other people you know in the same organization share your views? Have you ever had people from a school or university project take part in your activities? How were they perceived, and how well did they fit in?” This covers the authenticity problem.

As a writing task, students could look at an ethical conflict in today's society. For example, the attempted Obamacare repeal is a suitable topic because even politicians within the Republican party voted against it, most prominently Senator John McCain.

To incorporate the encounter with the Other, students can interview international students on their campus and ask them about their experiences as foreigners in the United States. A possible assignment could be to let American students define American culture and also let the international students define it. Also, the international students can describe at what times they felt “othered” in the United States and on a college campus. As far as writing about the Other is concerned, students could write about a time when

they felt like the Other, maybe on study abroad, on vacation, or in unfamiliar surroundings of any kind and then transcend the concept to writing about people in similar situations. The current debate about “Dreamers” is a possible topic. In what ways are semi-illegal immigrants (for lack of a better term) “othered” in the United States? Service learning is meant to provide a direct encounter with the Other, but students also have indirect encounters with the Other on a regular basis.

Students will definitely be asked to apply the concepts they learned about to new situations that were not a part of the class content. They will have a choice of selecting a topic that deals with conflict (hot topics, current political issues, crises, etc.), using the works of others ethically (for example, in the music industry), and encountering the Other.

General Thoughts and Considerations

Defining bad faith is the first step in explaining Sartre's concepts to students. As we have seen, bad faith is the act of deceiving oneself by thinking that one's own actions are unique even if they have negative consequences for others. Because of their uniqueness, there is no danger of them being discovered or judged, and as such they cannot be seen as negative or unethical. We have seen bad faith at work with President Donald Trump's recent travel ban for Muslims from certain countries in the Middle East. The travel ban states:

Among other actions, Executive Order 13769 suspended for 90 days the entry of certain aliens from seven countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and

Yemen. These are countries that had already been identified as presenting heightened concerns about terrorism and travel to the United States. Specifically, the suspension applied to countries referred to in, or designated under, section 217(a)(12) of the INA, 8 U.S.C. 1187(a)(12), in which Congress restricted use of the Visa Waiver Program for nationals of, and aliens recently present in, (A) Iraq or Syria, (B) any country designated by the Secretary of State as a state sponsor of terrorism (currently Iran, Syria, and Sudan), and (C) any other country designated as a country of concern by the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of State and the Director of National Intelligence. In 2016, the Secretary of Homeland Security designated Libya, Somalia, and Yemen as additional countries of concern for travel purposes, based on consideration of three statutory factors related to terrorism and national security: “(I) whether the presence of an alien in the country or area increases the likelihood that the alien is a credible threat to the national security of the United States; (II) whether a foreign terrorist organization has a significant presence in the country or area; and (III) whether the country or area is a safe haven for terrorists.” 8 U.S.C. 1187(a)(12)(D)(ii). Additionally, Members of Congress have expressed concerns about screening and vetting procedures following recent terrorist attacks in this country and in Europe. (cited in *The Independent*)

The element of bad faith at work in this excerpt is the arbitrary selection of countries upon which the travel ban is enacted – only Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. Terrorists can come from any country in the world, not just a select group with a high rate of terrorist activity or known resentments against the United States. Believing a

travel ban against a limited group of countries can prevent terrorists from entering the United States is self-deception, and it also completely overlooks the fact that some terrorists may already live legally in the United States. This includes permanent residents and naturalized citizens as well as domestic terrorists who were not born in a Middle Eastern country. Nothing prevents an American citizen from converting to Islam and joining a terrorist group, and not all acts of terrorism have a religious background. Many of the recent mass shootings, which may also be classified as terrorist acts, have been committed by Caucasian males who do not even fit the common profile of a Muslim terrorist.

Another notion of seriousness and bad faith is noticeable in police violence against black people. The sheer existence of a campaign named *Black Lives Matter*, countered with *Blue Lives Matter* and *All Lives Matter*, shows that there is a need to remind people that all human lives are equally precious and need to be protected. There are phrases related to an increased likelihood of black people being pulled over while they are driving without doing anything suspicious, often referred to as *driving while black*. Police officers are often more likely to use physical violence against people of color than against white people. Seriousness is at work in the phrases: All Lives Matter is the most fitting response. The existence of Black Lives Matter shows that there is an underlying notion in the minds of some racist police officers that black lives are expendable when there is a threat or when the police officer on duty assumes the person he is dealing with is armed. There are cases where people only reminded officers that they had a gun in their car (which is a legal right) or who just reached over to get their

license and registration and were shot because the officer assumed a threat.

As Sartre points out, “freedom as the definition of man does not depend on others, but as soon as there is commitment, I am obliged to will the freedom of others at the same time as I will my own. I cannot set my own freedom as a goal without also setting the freedom of others as a goal.” (Sartre *Existentialism* 48-49).

Based on this explanation, *All Lives Matter* is a more universally valid response. *Black Lives Matter* is a justified response, but would ultimately exclude other ethnicities, too, such as Hispanics or Asian-Americans. The discussion about the border wall along the border to Mexico and the perception among some parts of the population that illegal immigrants from South America are one of the major reasons for an increase in crimes (often completely wrong and unjustified) shows that there are other minorities that also need protection.

The recent discussion and political controversy about repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”) is an example for the Other in terms of financial status and pre-existing health conditions. As a matter of fact, people who already are sick or in bad health need health insurance much more than wealthy people whose standard of living allowed them better nutrition and regular preventive medical measures.

The ACA brought affordable health insurance to millions of Americans who had not been insured before. The price was paid in higher premiums for people who already had health insurance before the ACA. The situation before the ACA was described as poor people going to the emergency room, the middle class having adequate, but not great insurance, and the wealthy being able to afford things like open-heart surgery or

cancer treatments with chemotherapy. There are cases where middle class Americans were diagnosed with cancer and limited the amount of medication they took depending on how much money they had available. An article on NPR by Liz Szabo states: “One-quarter of all cancer patients chose not to fill a prescription due to cost, according to a 2013 study in *The Oncologist*. And about 20 percent filled only part of a prescription or took less than the prescribed amount.” (NPR 2017) This may sound harsh, but chemotherapy and cancer-related surgery are expensive “items” for an insurance company. Before the ACA, previously existing conditions like asthma, diabetes, or sickle cell anemia also made it nearly impossible to obtain affordable coverage for medical expenses. Sartre states: “One can choose anything, as long as it involves free commitment.” (Sartre *Existentialism*, 51) One of Sartre's major factors of the for-itself is human free will. Americans value individualism and freedom of choice more than most western industrial nations. If a person can afford health insurance, but for some reason does not want to purchase it, the time before the ACA allowed that person to just save money and pay higher rates for medical issues if they did come up. Now, a person without any health insurance pays a tax penalty when tax returns are due. A single-payer system like in most European countries requires the employer and the government to pay a certain amount of the premium while the policy holder pays the rest. This is true for the government-sponsored health insurance in Germany, for example. There is also private insurance for people who are self-employed or civil servants (government, city administration, school teachers, but not university professors anymore) in which the employer pays 50% of the costs of a procedure and the insured person pays the rest. At the end of the year, the insured person can either opt to be fully reimbursed for the other

50% by the insurance or to not be reimbursed, but instead receive up to three months of paid premiums back. People choose whatever is higher. The risk with private insurance lies in the frequency of procedures. If the policy holder chooses to be reimbursed too often, premiums rise, especially in old age. State-sponsored insurance has little to no premium increases, but longer waiting times for specialist appointments (such as to see a cardiologist or to have non-essential surgery, for example to remove varicose veins or LASIK) and no free choice of a hospital (usually people are required to pick the one closest to their residence).

Some of these things were introduced to Americans with the ACA, which is not a single-payer system, but shares some of its characteristics with single-payer systems. Repealing it will make premiums go down, but it will also leave millions of people who had health insurance for the first time completely without coverage. What is worth more? Freedom of choice or higher premiums for the good of all? If a person makes more than \$ 100,000 a year, the difference is negligible. But still people complain about “socialism” in healthcare. Had the American people voted on the ACA instead of just the members of congress, we could call it free commitment. But even in Germany, the health care system was never voted on by the people. Democracy has its limits. Only small countries like Switzerland, which has a history of direct democracy, let their citizens vote on matters other than general elections, mayors, or city council configuration.

One of the major challenges of the class is to teach students about solidarity, which is relevant for units 1 and 3. It has always been a difficult concept in the United States because of its relations to socialism or at least social democracy. Capitalism in the

U.S. is a bit more radical and less controlled than in Europe, and most people do not expect “handouts” from the government. Even the government's financial help to save the American automotive industry during its biggest crisis in many years was criticized as “communism” because the state was taking action to help publicly traded companies. Solidarity means that the strong support the weak because they identify with their problems. This ties into Sartre's notions of being-with. We become a community because we do not live in isolation, but because we have concrete relations with others. As John Donne said, “no man is an island”. Service learning can help to shape a student's social conscience, but the effect is sometimes negated by the strategies students employ to get a good grade. Existentialism aims at teaching students that even without the belief in the existence of God, human beings are able to create a moral compass to guide them as long as they find a way to use their anguish in a positive way and not give in to bad faith. The Other is real – and only through the acknowledgment by the Other we become aware of our own existence.

We have seen three cases of “othering”: The other in terms of religion, the other in terms of ethnicity, and the other in terms of health status and financial means to afford health insurance. Students will definitely be asked to write about a current controversial topic. They can choose one that is related to the three case studies or come up with an issue that they found themselves. Other options could include the diplomatic conflict between the United States and North Korea (there is a good deal of verbal intimidation happening on both sides).

Writing about topics like immigration or the ACA provides controversial issues for students to develop their own perspectives and become aware of opposing viewpoints.

Both involve heated debates, and both involve the Other. As such, they are similar to the Abbate / McAdams case. Who is in a position of power, and who has the better arguments?

Anguish, bad faith, and seriousness – these three concepts are constantly at work in all societies around the world. As long as we are aware of them, we can teach students to overcome them and develop an ethical reaction to all the problems they face in everyday life. We are in the presence of others. It is time to realize that the other is very much like us. According to Sartre, one of the big challenges is to always act generously. That involves not being envious of people who have more money than oneself, for example, but also to share a part of one's wealth with others who have less. Bad faith involves deceiving oneself. Once we recognize it, we can work on overcoming it.

Composition instructors can use the three main ideas that were pointed out in the case studies: bad faith can be realized in various ways, the Other is not just a matter of socioeconomic status (which service learning often uses as the only angle), but also religion, ethnicity, or nationality, and conflicts of interest and power occur in various venues, not just in the political arena. A composition class that uses Sartre's concepts of ethics can easily find other topics that pertain to the ethical concepts and dilemmas I talked about earlier. One of the challenges is to confront students with their own misconceptions and lack of knowledge and enable them to expand their intellectual horizons.

The class can potentially end with a reflection essay in which students describe what they have learned, how it will influence their future writing, and what they can do to make sure their writing embodies solidarity, generosity, and empathy. It will certainly help them

that they have become familiar with three different areas of conflict so they can apply their new knowledge in an area that may not have been covered by course content.

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