

# FORUM

NEWSLETTER FOR ISSUES ABOUT PART-TIME AND CONTINGENT FACULTY

15.1 FALL 2011

CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

## INSIDE

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>From the Editor: Reframing the Discourse:<br/>Contingent Voices, “Marginal” Teaching,<br/>and the Absence of “Contingency Studies”</b> | <b>A1</b> |
| Brad Hammer   |           |
| <b>Making It Visible: Documenting<br/>Contingent Labor</b>  | <b>A6</b> |
| Megan Fulwiler and Jennifer Marlow  |           |
| <b>Economic Epideictic Appeals: Tallying<br/>the Costs of Contingent Labor</b>  | <b>A9</b> |
| Chelsea Redeker   |           |

### **From the Editor: Reframing the Discourse: Contingent Voices, “Marginal” Teaching, and the Absence of “Contingency Studies”**

Brad Hammer

In the last issue of *Forum* that appeared in CCC (Sept. 2011), I urged our readers to consider the relevancy of engaging in a new form of inquiry that I termed “Contingency Studies.” In the following issue of *Forum*, which appeared in *TETYC* (March 2011), I contextualized the relevancy for this inquiry within our field’s historic commitment to teaching and learning. In particular, I charged our readers to begin studying how the physical, material, institutional, and economic marginalization formed by contingency creates complex barriers to instructor support and retention and further alters the quality of instruction.

This charge is not merely a call to our readers to make this indispensable research more visible; rather, it is a call to the CCCC Executive Committee (and other leaders) to consider the importance (pedagogical, disciplinary, collegial, ethical, etc.) of foregrounding this inquiry as the central focus for richer inquiry within CCCC. Consequently, like many of you, I waited with great anticipation for the searchable program for the 62nd annual conference to be published online. Unfortunately, while there were several important cluster headings that dealt with Teaching (Cluster 101), Theory (103), Research (105), and Information Technologies (106), there was no cluster dedicated to the largest single rank and cohort (“contingent”) amongst our instructorate. Put simply, it is time that we ask our leaders to affirm overtly what issues CCCC most committedly represents.

Inescapably, the quality of instruction is implicated by contingency. As such, the absence of contingency topics in our literature and within our conferences further

A1

**Editorial Board**

Bob Samuels, University of California, Los Angeles

Megan Fulwiler, The College of Saint Rose, Albany, New York

Sue Doe, Colorado State University, Fort Collins

Vandana Gavaskar, Elizabeth City State University, North Carolina

**About Forum**

*Forum* is published twice a year by the Conference on College Composition and Communication. As editor, I welcome your news items, book reviews, editorials, and/or articles related to non-tenure-track faculty in college English or composition courses. Submissions for the fall issue should be received no later than May 1; for the spring issue, the deadline is September 1. Note: Submissions will not be returned.

Submit your work electronically via email or an email attachment. Address your work to bhammer@unc.edu and put the words "*Forum* article" somewhere in your subject line. Submissions should include the following information:

- your name
- your title(s)
- your institution(s)
- home address and phone number; institutional address(es) and phone number(s)
- if applicable, venue(s) where submission was published or presented previously

For additional guidelines or information about *Forum*, contact Brad Hammer, *Forum* editor, bhammer@unc.edu, or phone 919-621-1000.

It is the policy of NCTE in its journals and other publications to provide a forum for the open discussion of ideas concerning the content and the teaching of English and the language arts. Publicity accorded to any particular point of view does not imply endorsement by the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, or the membership at large, except in announcements of policy, where such endorsement is clearly specified. Similarly, opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the Conference on College Composition and Communication.

© 2011 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Printed in the United States of America.  
ISSN 1522-7502

indicates a move away from our discipline's historical center, where the professional life of a compositionist would focus essentially on issues related to teaching and literacy. With the adoption and centralization of themes like "rhetoric" and "communication," our journals and conferences have shifted away from and thereby de-emphasized the work of those members of the instructorate who teach first-year writing and whose disproportionately contingent lives are spent engaged almost wholly in matters of pedagogy. Put simply, our professional discourse has moved away from pedagogy to embrace the work, theory, and writings of the minority elite within composition. Consequently, I have to ask, is there room in the CCCC for the 88.3% of compositionists who teach off the tenure track (Gere)? Or are our voices already subsumed by twenty-five years of ineffectual position statements that assert "the role that NCTE" should play in "supporting change" (NCTE College Section 356)? So, I ask, where is this support?

When I scoured the program book at our last conference in Atlanta, I found no more than a handful of talks that dealt with the history, politics, theory, or structures of contingency. What was present in Atlanta was an all-day workshop on "Labor Organizing in Hard Times" that was poorly attended because many of those interested in such events (contingent faculty) are generally not funded for conferences.

My hope for this year, which I promised to our readers in the issue of *Forum* (Sept. 2010) published immediately after the Louisville convention, was to publish annually a report from the CCCC Committee on Part-

time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor. Sadly, while this committee did meet in Atlanta in March, neither an official agenda nor a charge was put forth for the coming year. That is, since the vast majority of committee members were not in attendance in Atlanta, this important work is essentially and indefinitely on hold.

### **NCTE's Current Focus on Contingency**

As many of you know, NCTE has published their latest position statement on the "Status and Working Conditions of Contingent Faculty." This statement begins by explaining that in the past, similar efforts have "failed to restrain the growing reliance on contingent positions" (356). Consequently, among the requests made of local departments, in terms of shared "governance" and "greater specialization in position descriptions," NCTE "ask[s] faculty members who are employed in contingent positions to play a more active role in changing their circumstances" (357). But through what real mechanism can those subjugated within contingent roles assert such a voice toward change? In fact, many of the opinions gathered in the *Forum Contingent Faculty Questionnaire* reported real fears of reprisal for asserting such a voice. And without a strong and clear structure of support at CCCC, where are the real mechanisms for these colleagues of ours to unite and play such a role?

While I applaud the goals of the new position statement (like the many that preceded it over the past twenty-five years), it is only our professional organizations that can assert real compliance. Since the Wyoming Conference resolution more than two decades ago, these position statements have articulated quite clearly what's wrong (see "CCCC Initiatives on the Wyoming Conference Resolution" for a richer understanding). What they've all failed to do, however, is define real methods for and mechanisms of enforcement. And until NCTE and CCCC are willing to acknowledge this limitation, there will be little hope for our contingent colleagues to actualize any of the promises set forth in these pages.

Consequently, I have to ask, is our leadership doing enough? Yes, there are travel funds for contingent faculty to attend the CCCC convention through the Professional Equity Project (PEP). However, these awards are small and, even with NCTE's request to local administrators to provide "matching support," there is little hope for this type of mechanism to address the gross absence of those who teach off the tenure track from our central conversations.

Fundamentally, we've lost track of our earliest inquiry. That is, in the very first edition of *English Journal*, the journal that arguably gave rise to our field, Edwin Hopkins asked in 1912, "Can good composition teaching be done under present conditions?" In response to his own question, his essay answers no. While the conditions that Hopkins details were particular to a century ago, what remains constant is that writing instructors still "struggle to do all the work expected of them" (1).

However, today, within the economic conditions that produce a deepened marginalization, we are asking our colleagues to do this work under impossible conditions and at the cost of student learning.

Sadly, these economic realities support the desire of administrators to augment, not reduce, the number of contingent faculty within the academy. The economic value of this trend is chronicled in a recent essay by William Deresiewicz. In his piece, we see how departments of English overproduce graduate students in order to engineer a pool of cheap labor. Deresiewicz calls out the hypocrisy of the elite tenured professors who simultaneously serve in roles of mentorship as well as exploitation. Nowhere else is this corruption more visible than in departments of English with their deluge of unemployable graduate students engaged in the teaching of first-year writing. As evidence, the MLA, in the “Committee on Professional Employment: Final Report,” termed this “our scandalous overreliance on adjunct faculty members.” Yet, because of the economic benefits, nothing of substance is done. Why kill the golden goose? That is, within this model, where the “service course” produces appreciable revenue for English departments, the labor of the contingent faculty both produces and sustains the economic and institutional standing of the elite. This is not an assault on tenure. To the contrary, it is a call to parity or at least to the equitable distribution of resources to those who produce the revenues. However, the truth is, even faced with the public shame of this exploitation, we see neither moves toward economic parity nor shared governance. While treated like the stepchildren of the English department, contingent faculty do the onerous work of first-year literacy. Interestingly, those contingent faculty who teach under the best circumstances today (in terms of salary, teaching loads, length of contract, collegiality, etc.) teach in autonomous writing programs outside of departments of English. Perhaps supporting the growth of these types of programs instead of censuring individual sites of oppression is the best and most immediate focus of support that NCTE and CCCC can provide? But are we categorically ready to see the divorce of composition from English? Clearly, departments of English who benefit from contingent faculty exploitation have proven that they cannot self-police. They are the proverbial fox in the henhouse. Consequently, can the leadership of autonomous first-year writing programs like those at Denver, Duke, U-Penn, St. John’s, and others work directly with our professional organizations to reimagine and reconstitute the institutional place of the foundational C—“composition”—outside of English? Clearly, for as long as composition is wed to English and under the repressive yoke of its dominance, the funds that our “service” produces will always be used to offset departmental goals, graduate student labor, and elite salaries that are not our own. Consequently, we must seek autonomy to reclaim not only our own disciplinary place within the academy but the pedagogical value of our work.

Let departments of English redefine their own declining relevancy. For compositionists, we stand at an exciting crossroads where our relevancy can be taken up outside of English in as seemingly disparate, yet valuable areas of inquiry as literacy, technical writing, and digital media, to name but a few.

### **Forum's Charge**

Within the pages of *Forum*—one of the few spaces in which contingent faculty can voice their concerns—and on behalf of the incalculable number of colleagues who work for little pay and even less respect, I charge the leadership of both NCTE and CCCC to identify, gather together, and boldly empower the visionaries that produced autonomous writing programs to produce a new formulation of and space for first-year writing.

Our charge, as always, is principally one of pedagogy. Sadly, real mechanisms for support (whether local or national) are all but vacant, forcing contingent faculty into marginalized roles of non-belonging. Therefore, we are not only forced to ask broadly what responsibilities individual institutions bear in the construction of contingency, but also whether or not there is still room under the big tent for all four of our Cs?

### **Works Cited**

- "CCCC Initiatives on the Wyoming Conference Resolution: A Draft Report." CCC 40.1 (1989): 61–72. CCCC. Web. 23 June 2011.
- "CCCC Professional Equity Project (PEP)." CCCC. CCCC, n.d. Web. <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/awards/pep>.
- Deresiewicz, William. "Faulty Towers: The Crisis in Higher Education." *The Nation*. Web. 23 May 2011.
- Gere, Anne Ruggles. "Initial Report on Survey of CCCC Members." CCCC. Squire Office of Policy Research, National Council of Teachers of English. Web. 12 Jan. 2009.
- Hopkins, Edwin M. "Can Good Composition Teaching Be Done under Present Conditions?" *English Journal* 1.1 (Jan. 1912): 1–8. Print.
- Modern Language Association. "Committee on Professional Employment: Final Report." MLA. Web. [http://www\(mla.org/resources/documents/rep\\_employment/prof\\_employment/prof\\_employment5](http://www(mla.org/resources/documents/rep_employment/prof_employment/prof_employment5)
- NCTE College Section Working Group on the Status and Working Conditions of Contingent Faculty. "Statement on the Status and Working Conditions of Contingent Faculty." *College English* 73.4 (March 2011): 356–59. NCTE. Web.

## Making It Visible: Documenting Contingent Labor

Megan Fulwiler and Jennifer Marlow

In the recent issue of *College English* devoted to the topic of contingent faculty (March 2011), contributors Nathalie Singh-Corcoran and Laura Brady write that “the contingent faculty story has to stay visible not just locally but nationally.” They go on to suggest that the working conditions for contingent faculty should become “a regular and ongoing feature in our journals—and in venues that reach a broader audience” (Arnold et al. 422). We couldn’t agree more, and for two years we’ve been working on a way to make the issue of contingent labor as visible as possible through documentary film. Our current film project, *Con Job: Stories of Adjunct and Contingent Labor*, features interviews with contingent writing teachers, writing program administrators, and national labor leaders. As co-filmmakers, we come to this topic from different angles—Megan as a tenured writing program administrator and Jennifer as a doctoral candidate with many years of contingent positions on her CV—but we are united in our commitment to investigate contingency from a range of perspectives in order to better understand how it works, how it evolved, and how it can be changed.

Our first documentary, entitled *Re-Take 20: Voices from the Margins*, was a response to (and expansion of) Todd Taylor’s 2007 *Take 20* professional development video. Where Taylor’s film featured 20 composition scholars answering questions about pedagogy, we were interested in hearing from the other end of the academic hierarchy—the adjunct and contingent writing teachers who now teach the majority of first-year writing classes in this country. We interviewed fifteen writing instructors in New York’s Capital District who represented a range of degrees (MA, MFA, ABD, PhD) as well as institutions (community colleges, private liberal arts colleges, and large public universities). Originally we planned on simply using Taylor’s twenty questions, but we soon realized that we couldn’t separate questions about teaching from the material conditions of teaching. And that’s where things started to get interesting. The stories revealed many expected issues such as lack of office space, classes on multiple campuses, and semester-to-semester contracts, but we also heard stories about passionate teaching, innovative assignments, and dedication to a discipline. The central themes that emerged from our interviews—contract instability, invisibility, and disposability—echoed those identified in Eileen Schell’s 1997 book *Gypsy Academics and Mother Teachers: Gender, Contingent Labor, and Writing Instruction*. This fact alone illustrates how little has changed over the years. So while our original goal had been to simply expand the existing conversation about writing pedagogy, we became increasingly invested in providing a forum—as

did Barbara Wolf's 1997 film *Degrees of Shame*—for contingent writing teachers to represent themselves in their own voices.

We showed a twenty-minute portion of *Re-Take 20* at the 2010 Conference on College Composition and Communication, where the film generated a lot of conversation. The Bedford editor who had distributed Taylor's video came out of curiosity, but later explained that she wasn't sure if the project worked as a companion piece to Taylor's because, as she pointed out, "we weren't making any friends" with this movie. Our best bet, she suggested, would be to isolate the video clips about pedagogy and send them directly to the Bedford website for adjunct instructors. At first her suggestion made sense because the project was about teaching, after all. Upon further reflection, however, we realized that it only replicated the very problem our film attempted to address: the situation that results when a majority of teachers are isolated, exploited, and rendered invisible to both their full-time tenure-track colleagues and the very discipline they serve. Maybe we weren't making any friends with this movie, but that was because we were shining a light on the large elephant at the center of our field: that most first-year writing courses are actually taught by contingent faculty unable to attend conferences such as the one where we were showing our film. Making friends and making change rarely go hand in hand. We realized that we needed to place the voices and stories of contingent faculty within the broader context and history of labor in higher education in general and in composition in particular. This realization led us to begin our second documentary, *Con Job: Stories of Adjunct and Contingent Labor*.

In the last year we have interviewed more contingent writing teachers, national labor activists, and WPAs. The more people we interview, the more we realize the vexed and tangled system that makes contingency not only possible, but structurally embedded in contemporary higher education. In making our documentary, we have faced the same obstacles that labor organizing has itself struggled with for years—namely, the differences of opinion about how to achieve lasting and effective changes for contingent faculty. The problem of contingency and its proposed solutions are shaped by individual situations, institutional constraints, state laws, and ultimately, long-held societal beliefs about both the work and worth of writing instruction in higher education. Many argue for unions and collective bargaining, while others argue for revising the tenure system. Even within composition itself there is a bifurcated sense of the issue, as Lisa Arnold describes the false binary between "activist" rhetoric—those invested in affecting the local material conditions of contingent faculty—and "disciplinary" rhetoric—those who argue that we need to elevate the status of composition as a field. Arnold asks us to consider "in what ways do our professional rhetorics delimit the ways we read, write, and think

about contingent faculty in rhetoric and composition?" (420–21). Indeed, she goes even further to argue that "members of our profession who are committed to the improved conditions of contingent faculty have an ethical obligation to include and acknowledge the voices of contingent faculty consistently in our primary research and scholarship" (424). We present our film as a step in this direction.

The field of composition has a long history of advocating for contingent writing faculty dating at least as far back as the Wyoming Conference Resolution (1986), yet the reliance on contingent faculty has continued to increase exponentially while official position statements from a range of professional organizations have been unable to stem this tide. What has become clear to us over the course of making this documentary is that nothing will happen without collective action from all invested parties. What that action looks like may actually be less important than acknowledging the fact that contingent faculty alone cannot upend an entrenched system of exploitation without the support of tenure-track faculty and WPAs. As Cary Nelson, the president of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), argues, "most tenured faculty members do not understand the culture of contingent faculty—the interests, priorities, beliefs, values, work patterns..." (88). But that blindness is the result of privilege, and it comes at a high price when more than 70 percent of the professoriate is no longer on the tenure track. As Sue Doe and her coauthors write: "A determined and unified faculty with an objective of saving the university while also saving jobs can rewrite policy, inscribe new practices, forge new and ethical traditions, and acknowledge the mutual dependence of one faculty group on another" (446). The role of WPAs will be crucial for their unique position *between* the various groups—contingent instructors, tenure-track faculty, and administrators—and their commitment to advocating for writing programs and writing faculty.

Ultimately, we are all implicated and we are all responsible. The current model of higher education invites us to think in terms of hierarchies and power, but we'd be better off thinking in terms of ecologies—dynamic sustainable systems of interconnected relationships, responsibilities, and roles. The metaphor of ecology may, in fact, be the most useful one because, like global climate change, contingency is about local realities as well as larger systemic structures. We hope our film will highlight the complexities of contingency in a way that accurately represents the multifarious voices of contingent faculty, while also speaking to tenure-track faculty, WPAs, and the general public.

For more information about the documentary and the filmmakers, please visit our website at <http://www.conjobdoc.com>.

*Megan Fulwiler is an associate professor of English at the College of Saint Rose in Albany, New York, where she teaches courses in writing, rhetoric, and autobiography.*

*Jennifer Marlow is an assistant professor of English at the College of Saint Rose in Albany, New York, where she teaches courses in composition and new media.*

### **Works Cited**

- Arnold, Lisa, Laura Brady, Maggie Christensen, Joanne Baird Giordano, Holly Hassel, Ed Nagelhout, Nathalie Singh-Corcoran, and Julie Staggers. "Forum on the Profession." *College English* 73.4 (Mar. 2011): 409–27. Print.
- Doe, Sue, et al. "Discourse of the Firetenders." *College English* 73.4 (Mar. 2011): 428–49. Print.
- Fulwiler, Megan, and Jennifer Marlow. *Con Job: Stories of Adjunct and Contingent Labor*. Film.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Re-Take 20: Voices from the Margins*. Film.
- Nelson, Cary. *No University Is an Island: Saving Academic Freedom*. New York: NYU Press, 2010. Print.
- Palmquist, Mike, and Sue Doe, eds. *Contingent Faculty*. Spec. issue of *College English* 73.4 (March 2011): 345–476. Print.
- Schell, Eileen. *Gypsy Academics and Mother-Teachers: Gender, Contingent Labor, and Writing Instruction*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1997. Print.
- Taylor, Todd. *Take 20*. Bedford/St. Martins, 2007. Film.
- Wolf, Barbara. *Degrees of Shame*. 1997. Film.

---

### **Economic Epideictic Appeals: Tallying the Costs of Contingent Labor**

Chelsea Redeker

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Wyoming Resolution, a statement drafted by the participants of the 1986 Wyoming Conference on English to address the unfair working conditions faced by a growing number of postsecondary teachers of writing.<sup>1</sup> Although concerns about exploitative working conditions and unfair compensation had been voiced before, the Wyoming Resolution presented the first formal statement on contingent labor to the Executive Committee of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. In the intervening years, postsecondary teachers of writing have continued to argue for improved conditions for themselves and their colleagues, most recently in a special issue of *College*

*English* devoted to the topic of contingent faculty (Palmquist and Doe). Members of the field have not only conducted empirical research and argued against excessive use of contingent labor, but have also begun reflecting upon the effectiveness of their methods of argumentation (Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor, par. 2) as nationwide reliance on contingent labor continues to grow. This article adds to such reflections by analyzing the language of the Wyoming Resolution and the arguments that emerged from this statement. In what follows I identify a recurrent rhetorical strategy—an economic epideictic appeal—that is frequently used to argue for improved working conditions for contingent faculty.

### **The Wyoming Resolution and the Growth of Contingent Labor**

In an interview about the Wyoming Conference and subsequent resolution, Sharon Crowley recalled the general sense of optimism shared by the participants and their joint belief in the ability of these events to improve working conditions for contingent faculty. She claimed that “people left thinking we’ll take this to CCCC, and it’ll all be over in a year” (qtd. in McDonald and Schnell 368). As part of this optimistic call, the resolution authors charged the CCCC body to establish a set of professional standards for postsecondary teachers of writing and a means of filing a grievance against institutions that did not meet with these standards. Although members voted upon and passed this measure at the following meeting of CCCC, the 1989 “Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing,” the document that sought to establish the procedures called for in the resolution, proved to be more contentious than expected. Some argued that the document focused more on professionalization than working conditions, and many were disappointed by the realization that CCCC lacked the financial and legal resources to formally censure institutions (McDonald and Schnell 370). Since 1989, multiple statements have been issued and committees formed to address the problem identified in the Wyoming Resolution, including the 1991 “Progress Report from the CCCC Committee on Professional Standards,” the 1997 NCTE “Statement from the Conference on the Growing Use of Part-Time and Adjunct Faculty,” the 2003 CCCC “Resolution on Professional Standards for Instruction,” the 2010 CCCC “Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor Report,” and the 2010 NCTE “Statement on the Status and Working Conditions of Contingent Faculty.”

As has been noted in *Forum*, despite these repeated initiatives, the use of part-time, adjunct, and contingent faculty to staff postsecondary education continues to rise. According to the February 2010 report of the Coalition on the Academic Workforce, the percentage of faculty employed part-time doubled from 22% of all faculty in 1970 to 48.7% in 2007 (Coalition 1). Further, the 2008 MLA report “Demogra-

phy of Faculty" examined hiring patterns within English departments and found that "in four-year institutions, faculty members working off the tenure track, whether full- or part-time, make up about 60% of all faculty members in English . . . In two-year colleges, the figure rises to 80% for English" (Laurence 2). Although the MLA figures include both part-time and full-time faculty, who often face significantly different circumstances, these statistics highlight the increasing prevalence of contingent labor despite twenty-five years of our profession's initiatives and arguments. Nevertheless, many members of the field still share Crowley and her colleagues' original optimism that working conditions can be improved for the betterment of faculty, students, departments, and postsecondary institutions as a whole. Multiple argumentative strategies have been and must be used in the future to address the varied audiences—including students, parents, faculty, administrators, and legislators—who play a role in postsecondary hiring practices. The economic epideictic appeal provides an example of one argument that has the potential to speak to the broad, and often disparate, audiences who shape our institutions.

### **Appeals to Inequity and Appeals to Utility**

Writers of the Wyoming Resolution relied on a pair of appeals to argue against the exploitative use of contingent labor, appeals that have recurred in subsequent statements. These two appeals delineate the two primary objections voiced in the Wyoming Resolution:

WHEREAS, the salaries and working conditions of post-secondary teachers with primary responsibility for the teaching of writing are fundamentally unfair as judged by any reasonable professional standards (e.g., unfair in excessive teaching loads, unreasonably large class sizes, salary inequities, lack of benefits and professional status, and barriers to professional advancement). AND WHEREAS, as a consequence of these unreasonable working conditions, highly dedicated teachers are often frustrated in their desire to provide students the time and attention which students both deserve and need. THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED... (Robertson, Crowley, Lentricchia 278)

Seen in the originary document, the two appeals target, first, the inequity of the exploitation of contingent faculty and, second, the harmful effects of this practice on teaching quality. These appeals jointly function as epideictic rhetoric, shaping audience response by attaching negative values to the practice of using contingent labor. The epideictic work performed by this and other statements acts as an important step in the deliberative process since praising, according to the Aristotelian maxim, is akin to urging a course of action (61). In this case, censuring can likewise be seen as implicitly arguing for a specific kind of subsequent action.

The first appeal to inequity focuses on the unfair working conditions faced by

many contingent faculty. In their article detailing the circumstances of the Wyoming Conference and the rationale behind the drafting of the Resolution, Linda Robertson, Sharon Crowley, and Frank Lentricchia emphasize this appeal to inequity through the recitation of contingent faculty experiences and emotional responses. These include instances in which faculty were coerced to teach courses without pay or to undertake unreasonable teaching loads, and fear about the lack of job security (275). In appealing to inequity, the authors cogently point out the connections between the practices of contingent labor and those we seek to eliminate within the classroom. Recalling the conviction that “teachers of writing ought to enable students to discover freedom of self-expression,” the authors then point to the “irony that those of us charged with this significant responsibility often feel unable to speak freely about the fundamentally unfair conditions under which we labor” (274). By appealing to a value system that a large number of postsecondary teachers of writing acknowledge and accept, the authors position the practices of contingent labor as problematic in a way that resonates with this audience. This appeal continues to be used, most recently in the 2010 NCTE “Statement on the Status and Working Conditions of Contingent Faculty,” which has four main sections calling for “Fair Working Conditions,” “Fair Compensation,” “Involvement in Shared Governance,” and “Respect and Recognition” (Palmquist, Doe, McDonald, Newman, Samuels, and Schnell).

The other broad approach, the appeal to utility, comes to epideictic valuation from another angle. Instead of censuring unfairness or inequality, this argument seeks to undermine the utility or functionality of the practice. In effect, this appeal seeks to devalue a practice by claiming that it does not accomplish a primary goal or it sufficiently harms an equally important lateral goal. By appealing to utility, the drafters of the Wyoming Resolution claim that the use of contingent faculty actually undermines a key responsibility of postsecondary education—that of quality teaching. Importantly, those who use this appeal point to untenable working conditions as the root cause for decreasing teaching excellence, not the capabilities of these teachers, as seen in the excerpt from the resolution.

Although there have been numerous arguments pointing out the negative consequences of contingency for teaching quality, I would like to focus on a particular subset of this appeal to utility, what I am calling an economic epideictic appeal. An economic epideictic appeal uses economic terminology and analogies to argue for value based on perceived costs and benefits for a particular goal. Whereas the appeal to utility valued functionality, the economic epideictic argument goes a step further to value both functionality *and* efficiency. Within these arguments, appeals are judged not just for cost and benefit but also for shrinking cost and maximizing

benefit. Movements in the direction of cost or benefit determine positive or negative valuation, but the degree of change can also factor into the tabulation. Within the economic epideictic appeal, the relative amount of directional change towards cost or benefit is valued, and often only the highest level of performance will do. Thus, economic epideictic valuations are valuations of scale. This form of argument proves useful in engaging and disputing the economic rationale used to justify the increase in contingency; however, there are some potential concerns about this epideictic appeal which can be addressed through additional evidence and supplemental arguments.

### **Economic Epideictic Appeals: Tallying the Costs of Contingent Labor**

Economic epideictic appeals can be seen in the official resolutions and statements of CCCC and NCTE and in emerging scholarship about contingent issues. In some cases, the use of economic terminology appears as a direct response to the economic arguments used to justify contingent labor in postsecondary institutions. The effort to refute economic arguments for contingent labor by repurposing economic language can be seen most clearly in the 1997 NCTE "Statement from the Conference on the Growing Use of Part-Time and Adjunct Faculty":

We believe that those concerned about the quality of education must act together now to ensure that the use of part-time and adjunct appointments (most often utilized to achieve monetary savings and other short-term goals) does not risk imposing far more serious costs on students and families; the threats to student access to faculty, cohesive curricular development and implementation, the intellectual community, and faculty governance—the fundamental bases for educational quality—require our immediate attention. (par. 3)

This statement employs an economic epideictic appeal by engaging in the discourse of costs and benefits. However, instead of focusing purely on the monetary costs, this excerpt uses economic terms to identify other potential costs of this practice, specifically costs to educational quality. In this manner, the economic epideictic appeal provides a mechanism to tally more accurately the "hidden" expenses of contingency and thus to devalue practices that can be more properly seen as costly as a result of such arguments.

The economic epideictic appeal further relies on the importance of scale and the relative valuation of costs and benefits. In the 1989 "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing," we can see how scale plays a critical role in the argument by linking working conditions with teaching excellence. In the explication of the Statement, the authors contend that "as colleges have the right to expect of writing specialists the highest level of performance,

so they have to extend the greatest possible support" (330–31). Although recent scholarship has pointed out the need for more research to document and quantify the links between working conditions and teaching quality (Peckham and Hammer A6), economic epideictic appeals allow for less specificity. In the above passage, the authors are able to rely on the economic epideictic appeal, which values any cost as negative, to argue against hiring practices that result in a decline in working conditions. Even without direct evidence or exact figures, an economic epideictic appeal can make value arguments based on the unstated premise that the highest degree of efficiency and performance is the most desirable end. Anything less than the "highest level of performance" from writing specialists or "the greatest possible support" from institutions is deemed inefficient, and thus negative.

Scholars have also utilized economic epideictic appeals to compare the costs and benefits of contingent labor in an effort to more accurately describe the complex labor situation in postsecondary writing instruction. Such a strategy effectively creates a cost-benefit ratio, which is then used to make value arguments. In the NCTE "Statement from the Conference on the Growing Use of Part-Time and Adjunct Faculty," the authors acknowledge the complex circumstances of contingent labor, recognizing that some instructors prefer part-time employment and bring both their considerable teaching experience and their passion for their subjects to their classrooms (par. 19). Here, the benefits (both monetary and otherwise) of contingent labor are recognized even as the authors still suggest that these benefits need to be weighed against other "substantial hidden or indirect costs." The authors elsewhere identify these hidden costs: "the lack of program coherence and reduced faculty involvement with students and student learning . . . coupled with the inadequate professional support they often receive, create structural impediments that put even the most talented teachers at a severe disadvantage" (par. 2). Other costs include "teacher burnout, [decreased] student satisfaction, declines in disciplinarity, and non-disciplinary 'service' teaching" (Hammer A1). Additionally, scholars have identified the costs of contingency in other facets of academic life, such as academic freedom, the numerical decline of English majors, and the value of an English PhD ("Statement of Principles" 335; Frost A13–14). Although economic epideictic appeals can be used to negatively value any decline in teaching excellence, the detailed ratio arguments—which provide thorough accounts of the monetary and nonmonetary benefits and costs of contingent labor—could potentially prove more persuasive. By providing more evidence to substantiate cost claims, more comprehensive ratios could be determined and utilized in economic epideictic arguments.

In this manner, economic epideictic appeals engage and dispute the economic arguments most commonly used to justify ongoing reliance on contingent labor

while still acknowledging the complexity of such circumstances. Importantly, as the 2010 “Report from the CCCC Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor” has suggested, research needs to be conducted into the links between working conditions and the quality of writing instruction (Peckham and Hammer A6). The results of this research could then be employed to argue more definitively that the costs of certain employment practices outweigh their short-term or monetary benefits.

It is also critical to acknowledge that although economic epideictic appeals allow us to make valuations about costs and benefits within the context of teaching excellence, the arguments reviewed in this essay do not address how teaching is valued in relation to *other* activities and professions. The actions of the Wisconsin and Ohio state legislatures during the past winter show that teaching excellence is often considered less valuable than other economic activities, like balancing state budgets. Seen from this perspective, teaching is part of an even greater scale of valuation; and if teaching is not highly ranked, then arguing for better working conditions on the basis of teaching excellence will have little persuasive appeal. So, in addition to making economically based value arguments about how working conditions and hiring practices impact the quality of teaching, there is also a need to articulate value arguments about the importance of teaching relative to other aspects of public life. And, of course, such work is already occurring. *The WPA Network for Media Action* (Council of Writing Program Administrators) presents one such way that epideictic arguments, economic or otherwise, are made to the general public to advocate for the value of writing instruction and thus the need for better working conditions for postsecondary teachers of writing. Economic epideictic arguments can thus be seen as arguments of scale which can be used to argue for valuation and subsequent action based on the need for greater teaching excellence *and* for the improved valuation of teaching in relation to public benefit.

### Note

1. For further reading, see <http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/CCC/1989/0401-feb1989/CCC0401CCCC.pdf>.

### Works Cited

- Aristotle. *The Rhetoric and the Poetics of Aristotle*. Trans. W. Rhys Roberts. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984. Print.
- CCCC Committee on Professional Standards. “A Progress Report from the CCCC Committee on Professional Standards.” CCC. 42.3 (1991): 330–44. Print.

- CCCC Executive Committee. "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing." *CCC* 40.3 (1989): 329–36. Print.
- Coalition on the Academic Workforce. "One Faculty Serving All Students: An Issue Brief." *Coalition on the Academic Workforce*. Feb. 2010. Web. 11 Mar. 2011.
- Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor. "Committee Charge." CCCC. CCCC, 2010. Web. 11 Mar. 2011.
- Council of Writing Program Administrators. *WPA Network for Media Action*. n.d. Web. 11 Mar. 2011.
- Frost, Leslie. "Dual Tracks: Creating Tenurable Teaching Lines." *Forum: Newsletter for Issues about Part-Time and Contingent Faculty* 13.1 (2009): A12–16. Print.
- Hammer, Brad. "From the Editor: The Need for Research in 'Contingency Studies.'" *Forum: Newsletter for Issues about Part-Time and Contingent Faculty* 14.1 (2010): A1–3. Print.
- Laurence, David. "Demography of the Faculty: A Statistical Portrait of English and Foreign Languages." *Modern Language Association*. Modern Language Association, 10 Dec. 2008. Web. 11 Mar. 2011.
- McDonald, James C., and Eileen E. Schell. "The Spirit and Influence of the Wyoming Resolution: Looking Back to Look Forward." *College English* 73.4 (2011): 360–78. Print.
- Palmquist, Mike, and Sue Doe, eds. *Contingent Faculty*. Spec. issue of *College English* 73.4 (2011): 345–476. Print.
- Palmquist, Mike, Sue Doe, James McDonald, Beatrice Mendez Newman, Robert Samuels, and Eileen Schell. "Statement on the Status and Working Conditions of Contingent Faculty." *College English* 73.4 (2011): 356–59. NCTE, 2010. Web.
- Peckham, Irvin, and Brad Hammer. "The State of Contingency: A Report from the CCCC Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor." *Forum: Newsletter for Issues about Part-Time and Contingent Faculty* 14.1 (2010): A3–7. Print.
- "Resolution 5: On Professional Standards for Instruction." *2003 CCCC Resolutions*. CCCC, 2003. Web. 11 Mar. 2011.
- Robertson, Linda R., Sharon Crowley, and Frank Lentricchia. "The Wyoming Conference Resolution Opposing Unfair Salaries and Working Conditions for Post-Secondary Teachers of Writing." *College English* 49.3 (1987): 274–80. Print.
- "Statement from the Conference on the Growing Use of Part-Time and Adjunct Faculty." *NCTE Guideline*. NCTE, 26–7 Sept. 1997. Web. 11 Mar. 2011.

*Chelsea Redeker is a teaching fellow and PhD candidate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.*