**Writing a Conference Abstract:** In this workshop you’ll first glance over a paper you’ve written for a graduate-level course, so that you can fill out the questions below. Once you’ve filled out the questions, please look over the sample conference abstracts attached and then turn the answers to questions 1-5 into a similar abstract. You’ll be sharing your drafted abstract with a partner, and your workshop leaders will also provide feedback. Finally, we’ll go online to look at some of the major conferences in our field, to see which conference would be a likely one to submit your abstract.

**TITLE** (reflect the conference theme and clearly indicate your presentation’s subject):

1. State the problem, question, or current argument that your presentation addresses.

2. Summarize the scholarly influence(s) that will frame your presentation (maybe extrapolate a key idea or cite *very briefly* from a specific scholar’s work).

3. Highlight your methodology and 3-4 points in your plan of development.

4. Provide a concluding statement that suggests how your presentation will contribute to or challenge what people may think about the topic.

5. Edit—and edit again—to keep your abstract error-free and within the required word limit!!
Mouth Wide Shut: The Silencing and Voicing of Feminine Identity

One sentence description: This panel, spanning the diverse areas of the discipline, examines groups of women—rhetoricians, students, teachers, and writers—and how they have been silenced and how they have used silence and silencing as rhetorical space for the formation of identity.

Building on Cheryl Glenn and the work of other scholars in the area of rhetorical silence, this roundtable seeks to explore the ways groups of women—rhetoricians, students, writing teachers, and internet users—have in one way or another found themselves silenced by various cultural situations. In each of the cases described in this panel, women either have found voice or are in the process of finding voice through the work of scholars, teachers, and their own agency. As Glenn has argued, “silencing and silence” can be seen as “gendered sites of rhetorical delivery or invention.” These cases demonstrate unique ways that the silence has been broken, has been explored, or has even been used in reformulating identity.

Speaker #1 will set the stage for discussion with a paper entitled, “Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric and Composition Handbooks—The Condemnation of the Feminine.” Scholars have commented on the explosion of rhetoric handbooks in the nineteenth-century and noted that these rhetoric handbooks resemble regulatory artifacts perpetuating conceptions of rhetoric that were under siege from cultural forces outside the classical rhetorical curriculum. The rise of the feminine, the rise of African American voices, and the recognition of Native American voices all threatened to destabilize a discipline that had gone relatively unchallenged in terms of participation. In nineteenth-century America, then, arguments about the purpose of rhetoric became secondary to an implicit debate on participation: who was allowed to determine the role of rhetoric in the New Republic? But as the nineteenth century progressed, the debate surfaces in overt condemnations of specific keywords connected to new participants in rhetoric specifically condemning effeminacy and the feminine. This paper will trace the initial absence of the discussion of the feminine in early rhetoric textbooks to the overt condemnation of it in the craft of rhetoric.

Speaker 2’s paper, “Women’s Work: How Writing Program Administrators Used Alternative Rhetorics to Build a Discipline,” examines how, because of its use of non-traditional rhetorics and group meaning-making, administrative work has historically been dismissed as "nonrhetorical." Because, as Andrea Lunsford states, "the tradition has never recognized the forms, strategies, and goals" used by this group, their work is most often categorized as the "service" arm of departments instead of as an intellectual contribution to the field. It is, however, through this very dismissal that administrative practice has found an opportunity and need for communal meaning-making to shape its discipline. Thus, through a close examination of the historical evolution of writing program administration, we can give voice to work and workers that had previously been silenced.

Speaker #3’s presentation, “The Dramatics of Female Identity Formation: Writing and Theater,” will demonstrate how young female writers with no sense of personal empowerment learn to build strength of character in a unique class, “Public Women: Chicago Theater and Film.” Team taught by a rhetorician and theater professor, this class uses the Chicago art scene as a laboratory of how turn-of-the-century women used the arts to find public voice and advocacy. The class includes a trip to the city and interviews with current artists living, working, and making a difference for women in the Chicago arts scene. The final research project demands that students become a public woman by researching an artist, writing a monologue, and developing that monologue for public performance. The students act themselves “into a way of being,” into a public figure who can speak, write, and engage the world as an artist. This method of identity formation is modeled after the Hull House players, a turn-of-the-century Chicago theater troop who used theater games and drama to empower female and immigrant populations in the city to take control of their lives and develop civic responsibility and identity.
Speaker #4's presentation, “Representing Disability and Sexuality: Eloquent Silences,” analyzes how two disabled women use silence in an LGBT studies course to construct their identities and assume positions on issues that would otherwise marginalize or subjugate them. They both use interactive writing technologies to initiate conversations, challenge dominating perspectives, and demonstrate a rhetorical eloquence that classroom speaking situations inhibit. Online, these two women not only articulate queerness more powerfully, but they also teach their classmates to practice “a rhetoric of responsive and responsible listening that matches our rhetorical responsibilities for speaking” (Bruggemann). Their online presence ultimately reconfigures the discursive space that they occupy in the classroom, so that their silence becomes a signifier of “the good person speaking (and writing) well.”

Speaker #5's presentation is entitled, "Identity (and) Politics: Gendered Writing Online and in the Classroom." In the ancient agora, the opinion makers, the “politicos,” the shapers of public policy and civic action were men—individuals who successfully prevailed over their counterparts in that agonistic forum while women were primarily consigned to the private and (publicly) silent life of the household. Despite its acclaimed democratizing potential, today’s electronic agora, the “blogosphere,” remains a product of a culture in which the direct, aggressive, and narrowly-focused writing style of so-called “political” blogs is given public attention and credence while the more emotional, verbose, and unorganized writing style of “online journals” and so-called “mommy blogs” is devalued, marginalized, and relegated to the categories of “private” and “personal” writing. Such gendered inequities in writing continue to exist in today’s composition classrooms as well. Writing teachers have consistently privileged what Miriam Brody categorizes as “manly writing”—writing that is plain, forceful, and coherent. This presentation, will consider some ways in which teachers of composition might use blogs to examine what gets identified as “good” writing and who get identified as “good” writers, whose issues get identified as worthy of public attention and whose issues get identified as “private.”

Some suggested conferences:

- Modern Language Association
- Midwest Modern Language Association
- Conference on College Composition and Communication
- Linguistic Society of America
- Association of Writers and Writing Programs
- International Conference on Medieval Studies
- Renaissance Society of America
- Rhetoric Society of America
- Computers and Writing
- American Literature Association