

## **The Department and the Discipline—Permanence and Change: Interview with Richard H. Thames**

Richard H. Thames

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The following offers an interview with Richard H. Thames, Associate Professor in the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies at Duquesne University, conducted by graduate assistants Michael R. Kearney and Natalia E. Tapsak on September 8, 2023. Dr. Thames reflects on his professional association with Ronald C. Arnett and the ways that Arnett's scholarship, teaching, and service influenced the department and the discipline.

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### **How would you describe the department's approach and position in the discipline when you first joined?**

That's ancient! You're going to find out approximately how old I am!

Actually, I wound up joining the department rather unexpectedly. I had been in the seminary and had gotten interested in rhetoric through one of my professors. I asked him where I should go, and since I was already in town, he said, "Just across town—Pitt." He gave me a recommendation, and I received a teaching assistantship. I thought this meant I would be assisting someone, but I was notified just before classes started that I would be teaching two Public Speaking classes. I said, "This is going to be difficult because I've never *taken* public speaking!" I thought public speaking was a remedial course in college, and I had been somewhat surprised, when I got interested in rhetoric, to find out that there were departments in speech and that you could even get a PhD in speech. My neighbor happened to teach speech at one of the nearby girls' private schools, Winchester Thurston, and her sister taught at Duquesne. They offered to help me put my class together. I met them for an evening, and they gave me some help, but I pretty much went off on my own.

Two years later, there was a note on my kitchen table from my roommate saying, "There's a job at Duquesne. It's yours, if you want it." I said, "Yeah, I want it!" I made an appointment to get interviewed. I went over for the interview on the third of July, and on the fifth, which was just before my birthday on the sixth, they

called—I had the job. The only thing was I had to learn phonetics. So, that gives you a clue.

Phonetics was required in the School of Education because they were trying to get rid of all kinds of rural accents so their people would sound educated. I would walk in and say (with a thick Southern accent—I grew up in Alabama), “I’m Professor Thames, and I’m going to teach you how to talk right.” At one point, I wound up teaching three phonetics classes a semester for a year. It was horrible! I taught that and public speaking. After about three years, one of the faculty members left, and they asked me to teach a lecture course.

This was when the department was beginning to expand. It, like many other speech departments, had emerged out of the English department. We became Speech and Theater on the basis of performance, while drama stayed in English. So, we could study Shakespearean plays, and drama students could study Shakespearean texts. The only full professor in our department had a PhD in oral interpretation. For instance, he taught lectors for the diocese, acting, and a number of other things. The reason I had gotten the job was because a member of the department became ill with an unexpected illness, and they didn’t know if he would come back. He taught directing and courses like that. I was hired year to year. There were three people in theater, and one or two in speech. This was the beginning of audiology and speech pathology, which is now part of the Rangos School of Health Sciences. So, we also had a few people from Mercy Hospital teaching then.

That was the department. We had a person who did not even have his master’s and was teaching part-time with us interpersonal and group discussion—the hot new classes at the time. This was when the name “communication” indicated more of a social science approach. There was a great deal of tension between communication and rhetoric in a lot of departments.

So that’s what the department was like when I got there.

## **What kinds of academic changes took place after that?**

The department began to change quite a bit over the next few years. The professor of oral interpretation retired. We dropped a lot of classes in acting and oral interpretation. We hired someone full time to teach interpersonal and group discussion and all those courses that were part of “communication” at the time. My role expanded, and I got to teach a senior-level class. I taught Thomas Kuhn ([1969] 2012). I remember having lunch with somebody from education, and he was flabbergasted that I taught something as complex as Kuhn to my undergraduates. I still do that, by the way; I still talk about paradigms and rhetorical induction in my undergraduate history class.

There was a rather limited sense of what constituted speech at the time. I was doing my best to expand it. I had not gotten my PhD yet. I was three or four courses short, so I was taking those to finally get to my comps and then my PhD. Everybody was telling me I was lazy, and I wasn’t getting my PhD, but I think I was the second person in my cohort to get my PhD, and the other guy beat me by

two weeks. I was the first person in the department that had a PhD in rhetoric and communication.

They had hired a friend of mine from the history department, who was a full professor; the graduate dean had created a position for her. (This was when the college had a dean, and the graduate school had a dean; the dean was dean of more than the college. It was a very strange arrangement. It was only in the next few years that they consolidated the graduate departments in the particular school they were a part of.) The graduate dean, who administered graduate programs in the college as well as other schools at the university, hired a colleague in history to find programs that would cost very little and prove profitable. This colleague discovered “liberal studies” as a popular possibility. It was for people who enjoyed school, missed school, and went back just to read things and have intellectual discussions with other people. At one point, I wound up directing the program for several years.

The other program was a master’s in communication. No one in the department taught in that program before me. When I was finally assigned a course, I insisted that if I was teaching in a graduate program I wanted to be treated like graduate faculty. Graduate faculty typically only had three course preparations, instead of four, which I had had for nearly ten years—two in public speaking and two in phonetics.

At one point, they decided to turn one of the older buildings into a communication center, and they moved journalism and speech down there because both were beginning to take off, particularly under the rubric of mass communication. But part of the problem was that these were two departments that did not typically get along and were constantly fighting—though I had good friends in the journalism department, such as an older friend that taught advertising. He had a house up in Lake Erie, and he would drive me up during the summer that I was doing most of the work on my dissertation. His wife was wonderful. She would ask, “How’s the dissertation going?” She’d look at her watch and say, “All right, that’s ten minutes. I don’t want to hear anything more about it.”

At that point, there was a lot of tension between journalism and communication because they taught *writing* for radio and TV, but we had someone teaching radio and TV *announcing*. Announcing, obviously, was a *speech* function, whereas journalism was a *writing* function. It was the same kind of split that had occurred with English. This was also the beginning of organizational communication, and organizational communication tended to cover some of the same material that PR did. So, there were constant conflicts between us and journalism.

In the mid-80s, they decided they were tired of our fighting over commonalities and who would be teaching what, and they combined the two departments. We became a department of communication. The journalism people chafed at that, and it really did not work well. There was a period when you were seeing journalism and speech being merged together all over the country, and then after about ten or fifteen years, there was a period when all of those departments were splitting up again. When we had been separate, we fought over what we had

in common. Once we got together, we fought over our differences. There were a lot of discussions about scholarship, particularly once we had a PhD program. They wanted to get scholarly credit for writing newspaper and magazine articles, and we said, "No, that's not scholarship."

### **What led the department to be interested in the work of Ronald C. Arnett and to bring him on as department chair?**

Once we merged, they wanted to get an outside person from the field to chair the new department, and the first year's search was botched. They could not find good candidates. I argued that they did not know anybody in the first place and that they needed someone with connections and friends. We also needed to advertise far more widely than we had. I was not on the search committee because there was a committee that was reevaluating all the programs in the college, and they put me on that instead.

We had a national search. Through some connections I had with Iowa, because of some work I had done helping to organize the Kenneth Burke Society conference at Temple University, I asked for recommendations. A friend from Iowa recommended somebody to us who had credentials in both communication and journalism, which seemed perfect. That chair began to hire people who were more in communication than in rhetoric. Some journalism faculty were encouraged to retire, and we took on the character more of a social science program, even though the hired chair and I were in rhetoric.

As the story always seems to go, we didn't get along. There was constant warfare and fighting. We eventually had to begin a search for a new chair. This time, the entire department was on the search committee. We had some extraordinary candidates. I called up a former faculty member and asked if he knew anybody, and he said, "Ron Arnett," who had been one of his wife's professors. I wound up talking with Ron quite a bit on the phone and got him to apply.

We ended up pursuing a different candidate unsuccessfully for about three weeks and received no answer. In the meantime, Ron had been interviewing elsewhere and had been offered a position as provost, because he had been vice president and dean at his alma mater, Manchester College. (In fact, if we really get into the details, we had been interested in Ron during a previous search, before his appointment at Manchester, but we were unable to hire him at that point.) If we had offered Ron the position right out of the gate, we again would not have been able to hire him, because he was waiting on another position as provost. He thought about it and decided he did not want to be an upper-level administrator again. He wanted to be closer to his discipline, and when you are provost or dean, it is more difficult to exercise your discipline. He wanted to come back as chair. We offered him our position three weeks later, after he decided not to take the other job—perfect timing.

## **What are some of the biggest changes you have seen in the department's approach and position in the discipline since Dr. Arnett became chair?**

Once he was hired, Ron had discussions with the president, John Murray, and the provost, Michael P. Weber. I had gotten to know Weber over the course of the year because he had been the graduate dean and had been on the committee for evaluating all the departments in the college. He was very pleased that we had hired Ron, and he and the president talked to Ron, who was interested in starting a PhD program. The dean at the time thought there was more money to be made in PhD programs, so he was in favor of that. Over Ron's first couple of years, he did a very good job of putting a fractious department back together.

By that time, English was going through its own throes. Interpersonal difficulties were rife. They were searching for a new chair. The president suggested that Ron lead the committee, because he had put back together this fractious department. He had a reputation for dealing with things like that. So Ron headed up the search committee for a new English chair. They finally found three people they could all agree on, but when they took the names to the dean and the president, the president felt that Ron had done such an extraordinary job of holding together a fractious search committee and getting them to work well that it was stupid to be going outside to find a chair. Three of the leading candidates were chairs of departments of English and communication, because these disciplines had not universally split over the course of the century; speech was still in some English departments. The president was hesitant to bring in a stranger to oversee the department, to take a chance, when we already had someone who had chaired the committee and proven to be a miracle worker in holding people together. He wound up naming Ron the chair of the English department, and the communication department was then affiliated with English. In return for doing that, the president backed our creation of a committee to explore the possibility of putting together a new PhD program in rhetoric.

We worked on that over the year and submitted our proposal to the state. There were a number of questions. I was on that committee with a faculty member in the English department. We were allowed, then, to start a trial period of the PhD, which could last between three and five years. The PhD was a joint program, and we had a sizable number of people apply. I think Annette Holba may have been one of our first students. Things seemed to be going along swimmingly, except that the English department chafed at having a chairman who was not in English. Ron had gotten along well and had brought the English faculty together. In return, the united English faculty were now united against our being affiliated departments. They wanted to have their own chairman and to break away.

We wound up splitting again, and they found their own chair without Ron's help. Since the English department already had a PhD, we got the newly created PhD program. We were still combined with journalism, and now with the PhD program, there were disputes about the nature of scholarship. Again, when communication and journalism were separated, we fought over what we had in

common. When we joined together, we fought over our differences. So, journalism split off, creating their own master's program and eventually merging with multimedia arts. This has happened to much of journalism; it's all on the internet now. They merged and we got the PhD program. We were back down to rhetoric and communication. In fact, we were the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies.

When we hired Ron, he had said that the health of the department would depend on how rhetoric was accepted, because he found this to be true just about everywhere he had been. If the rhetoric part of the program was healthy, then the department was typically healthy, too. By then, a lot of the differences between communication and rhetoric had completely disappeared. The specific use of the term "communication" from a social science approach began to drop out. It was not necessarily a social science approach any longer. Many of the original tensions disappeared.

Our PhD program was "okayed" early and considered exemplary by the state. A couple of years later, the university decided to look at all the graduate programs, as they had done with the undergraduate programs. Calvin Troup and I put together the report, which was also considered exemplary. We became fairly established by then, and our program has been running for nearly twenty years. So it went until Ron's recent retirement.

### **How did you see Dr. Arnett embody his work and philosophy in scholarship, administration, and teaching?**

The scholarship question is a matter of his modeling scholarship for other people in the department. (I do believe that, after five years, Janie Harden Fritz and I were the only ones left from the original department. Janie had come in January of 1992, and most of these changes with Ron had occurred a year and a half later.)

As I mentioned earlier about administration, Ron had had the choice of going on to be provost or president at a small college, and he decided to stay close to his discipline. He felt that he was not exercising his discipline as an administrator. He always felt most at home as a chair. I really appreciated that because I had seen situations at other colleges where the chair was quite ambitious, and it did not always work out to the health of the department.

In terms of teaching, Ron was a very good teacher. Again, he modeled that. We are evaluated in terms of scholarship, teaching, and service, and teaching was always first. Our focus of attention was not on the top journals, but we were a publishing department and I think we were and are considered one of the top programs in communication. In other words, everyone has gotten tenure on the basis of teaching excellence and scholarly effectiveness, and there is still quite a bit of scholarship that comes out of the department.

### **How has your professional relationship with Dr. Arnett affected your own teaching, service, and scholarship? For**

## **example, what might be some similarities and differences in scholarship between you and Dr. Arnett?**

Ron and I were interested in entirely different things, though there's not that much difference in our ages. We were going through school at much the same time: I was going through seminary while Ron was going through an interpersonal program at Ohio University. We both wound up reading a lot of hermeneutic, and we would talk about that. We felt that the introduction of hermeneutic had a lot to do with changing the discipline. At that time, if you were going to study the history of speech, you would study speeches—it was not the history of rhetoric. Kenneth Burke had been introduced in the early 50s, and there was more and more rhetorical scholarship occurring in the discipline in the 60s. Walter Ong was coming out of St. Louis, and we were getting the beginning of media studies. Many of the forces that had shaped departments over the course of the century were falling to the wayside, and there were new forces beginning to shape programs. For instance, if you're going to split writing and speech, then you have to identify what is important about speech, what distinguishes it as a discipline. Many departments took a political speech orientation up until the 60s, when we started getting the social science orientation and organizational, discussion, small group, and interpersonal communication. With the introduction of hermeneutic, Burke coming into the discipline, and Burke being from English many of the old distinctions became problematic and broke down. The department began to change. If you taught persuasion thinking in terms of rhetoric, then it was only natural to ask questions about interpretation. That's when many of us began to read hermeneutic.

This actually turned out to be a source of conflict with journalism. Journalists were beginning to ask questions about ethics, and they bordered on questions about interpretation, the ethical interpretation, of what was going on. They got right up to the door, and, in many ways, what caused the conflict was that they refused to go in. They were given the chance to become less professional and more academic in their orientation, around the question of ethics, which Ron was a big figure in, and hermeneutic. They just didn't want to do it. The most philosophy they were interested in was First Amendment philosophy, and we could not get them to go far into ethics other than rudimentary ethics. We certainly could not get them into questions of interpretation. See, newspapers had originally been party organizations, but as newspapers increasingly began to expand and have the possibility of large distributions, they could no longer be party organizations. So, they followed the emerging ethos of the day, which was to be scientifically objective. That began to inform a journalism for the next century or so. When you start asking questions about ethics, and ethics begins to shade over into interpretation, it makes the scientific notion of reporting objectively somewhat problematic. So, they didn't want to ask the deeper questions. This had a lot to do with why we, again, wound up splitting. They insisted on remaining professional, a profession, and did not move into academia.

But, like I said, Ron and I talked a lot about hermeneutic. When the department put the doctoral program together, we stressed that there should be a course in hermeneutic, that it was an important course for people in rhetoric. There were also more and more people in communication who were reading hermeneutic; it became quite characteristic of the field. Of course, that led into deconstructive hermeneutic, which was a new era of conflict, but it was over far more substantive questions.

Regarding the question of similarities and differences in scholarship, as I mentioned, Ron and I had been interested in quite different things. Besides the interest in hermeneutic, the other area of interest that we shared was economics. I had a distaste for economics for as long as I could remember. The only time I paid attention to economics was in the 80s with Reagan's tax cuts. However, one of my best students had stayed in touch with me for years. He was from Pittsburgh and got his PhD in finance. By the way, the irony was that when my wife went back to school and got her MBA, he was her TA. We became fairly good friends. I remember getting interested enough in economics at the time that I said to him, "I have been reading a lot of this stuff, and I've just got one really big question: 'Is there any such thing as "enough" in modern economics?'" He thought about it for a minute and said, "I don't know why I'm saying this, but no."

"Enough" turns out to be, as I discovered when I got interested in this again, a really important concept in Aristotle's economics. I had been studying Burke for years, did my dissertation and all my publications on Burke, but I had never really done much on Marx. So I had said, "Well, I really need to start reading Marx." I started reading Marx and finding a lot of secondary work on Marx. That was when I discovered Scott Meikle, who had written *Essentialism in Karl Marx* (1985) and *Aristotle's Economic Thought* (1995). And that was when I started getting interested in economics not as a social science or pseudo-science but as a matter of rhetoric, which is Aristotle's approach. So, Ron and I began talking about that because we wound up doing some things in common then.

When the department split, they were asking me to teach Rhetoric and Philosophy of Advertising. I said, "I don't want to do that. I want to teach Marketplace," which was great because there wasn't anybody else who could teach it. They said, "You don't know anything about it." I said, "Well, I want to learn!" That's the virtue of having a PhD program. You don't have to know more than your students; you can learn at the same rate as them, but you're doing it semester after semester after semester. So I got quite interested in that, and I wound up teaching an undergraduate course in it. Now I've got a new course called Rhetoric and Economics at the junior/senior level, which I taught for the first time last year.

The economics got Ron and me interested in a lot of the same philosophical questions. I would end up reading Smith, who was in ethics prior to having written *The Wealth of Nations*. We would argue about Smith and his notion of the impartial observer. We had some different opinions on that. One of the issues that emerged out of that is that I got quite interested in Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes is considered the father of modern political science, but he's also considered by many as the father of individualistic competitive capitalism. This got me reading a lot of

the stuff that Ron read, like Alasdair MacIntyre. People don't realize that MacIntyre had early in his career been a Marxist before he renounced Marx and became far more interested in Aristotle. I got quite interested in that. I had taught, with a person in journalism, a course in ethics, where I had wound up, because I had always been interested in Galileo, talking about Hobbes—there are quite a few connections between them. Hobbes then led me to go through a number of readings that I might not have gone through.

One of them was a college mate of Burke's, John Herman Randall, who had stayed at Columbia and become the Woodbridge Professor of Philosophy and ultimately the dean. I remember I was reading Randall's (1960) book on Aristotle, and he talked about what it meant to be a political animal. This was Hobbes! This was Aristotle! This was the whole nuts and bolts of economics!

It became clear to me how Hobbes was operating. Hobbes famously dissolves the polis. He treats it mechanistically. He takes it apart like a machine, and then if he can explain how to put it back together, it means that he understands it. If you're Aristotle, you can't take the polis apart and put it back together. It's like an organism. If you take the organism apart, you lose the holistic forces that originally held it together. So when Aristotle says that we're political animals, he's saying that we're animals of the polis and that anything that is a-polis is a beast or a god. He defines us primarily as linguistic animals. Then, when he goes on to say that we are political and rational, he is talking about—and this is what I read from Randall that I never read anywhere else and that got me so excited—the notion that you learn language only within the polis, thinking of the polis as a linguistic community. You do not learn to speak outside of the polis. We speak because we have first been spoken to.

If you understand that, and you look at what Hobbes is trying to do, it's impossible: If you take the polis apart, you lose something in the same way that if you take a cell apart, you just can't put it in the blender and put it back together again. You lose something, and what you lose is language and reason. You can't have a pre-political creature that decides to create a social contract and enter into the polis, because it would have neither language nor rationality, which are both critical for conceiving of and communicating the notion of a social contract. So Hobbes became nonsense.

In fact, I wrote the entry on Hobbes for Dr. Arnett's (2018) encyclopedia with Annette Holba and Susan Mancino. My claim was that Hobbes was looking for some naturalistic base for ethics. If you go back to the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* from the 60s, it was Alasdair MacIntyre (1967) that wound up writing the entry on Hobbes on "Egoism and Altruism." He wound up stressing, anti-Hobbes, not the notion of competition but of reciprocity. I started with that notion, but I've eventually moved away from it. Ron keeps saying he doesn't care what I call it, I'm still talking about reciprocity. But my idea is that if we're not called into language, what are we?

There's the instance of Victor in 1798—a child who is found without language in the woods of Aveyron. François Truffaut made a film about it called *The Wild Child*. About the time that the film showed up in Los Angeles, social services had found a girl, who they named Genie, who was raised without

language. Her father claimed she was mentally retarded and had kept her in her room, tethered to her crib with nothing but a potty. He beat her every time that she used language, that she tried to talk. They had a son, but he didn't do the same thing to the son. This was the "forbidden experiment": you raise somebody and forbid them language.

I got very interested in cases like that because, again, if somebody speaks, and you respond, then that's how language originates. We're called *into* ourselves and *out of* ourselves. We're called into this realm that the sophists called *nomos*, which features the linguistic nature of it all. *Nomos* is the word from which we get "name." We dwell in that realm; that's what makes us human. But we have to be *called* into that realm. The question was, it seemed to me, whether you were fully aware of it or not, that you felt a degree of gratitude toward the people who had called you. Whether you could articulate that or not, it's "*the voice of others*" (Thames and Mancino 2018, 232; italics in the original).

This is probably the source of some of the scholarly disagreement between me and Ron because Levinas talks about the face of the other. I don't know enough about Levinas, but he is one of those people who deny reciprocity, saying it is not the base. But I was inclined toward reciprocity because of MacIntyre, though I don't think it's necessarily a matter of reciprocity anymore. What Hobbes is trying to find is a new beginning for everything. That's why he comes up with his argument of the polis and the social contract. But there *is* a new beginning, a new naturalistic beginning for ethics, in the notion of the acquisition of language. We acquire language because somebody speaks to us, and does that elicit a degree of gratitude?

In my article on Hobbes for Ron's encyclopedia, I wound up writing that we are "befittingly oblige[d]" (Thames and Mancino 2018, 232). I was using the verb for obliged because it does not have the same ethical force as "obligation." When you're "obliged" to do something, it's like, "You really should consider this. It's something that's important." That's the way I talk about it now far more than the question of reciprocity. It's not that we feel an "obligation" because somebody has called us into language. I would say it's more that the beginning of ethics is the sense of gratitude that we feel toward others who have called us into language and, in a way, into ourselves, as conscious of ourselves, but also out of ourselves into the realm of *nomos*.

One of the interesting things that showed up in seminary is the question of the Holy Spirit, which has always been associated with community and communication. One of my favorite professors, who was one of the reasons I went to that seminary, pointed out to me that we can talk about something that exists *between* us, but that's two people. In Greek, when the object of the word *en* is plural, you should translate it as *among*. So, the question that I asked was "Where does the Spirit exist?" The Spirit exists *among* us. But where does language exist? We think it's in our head, but that's not language. That's a capacity for language, but the actual language we speak is *among* us. That's where language is found—among us. When someone speaks to us, they call us into that which exists among us. They call us into that larger linguistic fellowship, for want of a better word. And we

spend our lives within that realm—the realm of *nomos*. And when we develop a sense of ethics, I would argue that it begins in a sense of gratitude.

I find it remarkable that this question of where language comes from is not a question that everybody is asking. I read an excellent book by Christine Kenneally (2007) called *The First Word: The Search for the Origins of Language*. She has a PhD in linguistics from Cambridge, but she's a writer, not an academic. Her book is a pretty thorough investigation of language and the extent to which elements of language may be found in other species. It's a fascinating book. It stimulated a lot of my thought. (My great friend—my dissertation director, mentor, and best friend, really—Trevor Melia, before he died, asked me what books I was reading. He was always asking me what books I was reading. I recommended the Kenneally, and he said, "Can you send me a copy?" I sent him a copy while he was still semi-well. He died of mesothelioma that he contracted in the London blitz during World War II, though he nor his siblings never knew it, from asbestos that was constantly in the air from bombed buildings. In one of my last really thorough discussions with him, he talked about how the book was perfect. It was exactly what he wanted to read.)

So, I find the question remarkable. How is it that we have this capacity? Everybody talks about language, but where does it come from? The only person who I ever found who addressed that question is John Herman Randall. He addressed it, like I said, in his book on Aristotle. That had a lot to do with the way I wound up teaching Aristotle, the way I wound up teaching Jeffrey Walker, the way I wound up teaching epideictic, the way I wound up talking about the early period when rhetoric was emerging as a discipline along with poetry. I'm just surprised that it's not a larger question.

So, you can see what kind of questions I get interested in. That was one of the things we were discussing before Ron retired.

### **Is there anything else you want to say about Dr. Arnett?**

Just that I miss him. We had stopped doing it, but we, in various times of troubles, would take long walks together. He lived out in the North Hills, so we would take the 5-mile trek around the lake in the park. It's not so much that I miss *that*, because it had been quite a while since the last time, but I miss the *possibility* of doing that.

We shared a lot of things, and that doesn't mean that we always got along—we had some real arguments about various things—but I greatly appreciated the leadership that he brought to the department. And I greatly appreciated his friendship.

*Richard H. Thames, PhD, explores the rhetorical influence of ideas within and across historical periods. His work traces the intellectual lineage of thinkers from various historical periods and examines how their ideas shape, maintain, and change beliefs in intellectual and popular culture. He is known for interpreting Kenneth Burke in terms of the organicism and naturalism encountered at Columbia University in 1916. A founder of*

the Kenneth Burke Society, Dr. Thames helped organize the original Burke conference in Philadelphia in 1984 and the centennial conference at Duquesne in 1996. He edited the society's newsletter for over a decade and now serves on the editorial board of the society's journal, the KB Journal. Dr. Thames served as an Associate Editor of the Quarterly Journal of Speech (1998–2001) as well as a reader off and on.

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