

Pedagogical Applications for *The Ghost Reader*

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Beyond assigning the text to help students understand the complexity of their field, *The Ghost Reader: Recovering Women's Contributions to Media Studies* inspires a variety of pedagogical applications. These applications include but are not limited to: 1) “offering a template... for generations of ghost hunting,” 2) providing different methods of analysis, 3) parsing power dynamics that structure the historical record, and 4) “building new scholarship on [*The Ghost Reader's*] foundations.”¹ The following provides specific examples of each.

Templates: One potential pedagogical use of *The Ghost Reader* involves inspiring additional scholarly work that recovers the contributions of women in any field of study. For my own class on “Women in World Thought and Literature,” this effort includes asking students to conduct archival research and contribute additional chapter(s) to *The Ghost Reader* on more “ghost(s)” who were silenced and erased from the historical record. In line with *The Ghost Reader*, students would excerpt a work from a selected scholar and provide pertinent bibliographic details to help the reader understand the excerpt and its value to the field. Importantly, this work should extend outside of media studies as women’s contributions in most disciplines are historically misrepresented, distorted or erased in order to uphold traditional power dynamics.

Novel Methods: In another pedagogical application, students would not only track traces of a “ghost” but do so by employing methods considered “novel” in archival studies or by employing methods used by the recovered “ghosts” themselves. These inventive methods include revaluing secondary sources and marginalized forms of authorship, creating a broader understanding of intellectual work, and gaining insight by physically visiting the places of scholarly production. In the last example, students would not only visit where the work is housed in the archive, but where the work was created to gain some insight into motivations for the work.² Admittedly, some students would not be able to access these locations due to space, time or means, so they could attempt a congruent analysis by locating images, maps or sounds depicting the place and/or neighborhood of the scholar.³

¹ Elena Hristova, Aimee-Marie Dorsten, and Carol Stable, “Introduction” in *The Ghost Reader: Recovering Women's Contributions to Media Studies*, eds. Elena Hristova, Aimee-Marie Dorsten, and Carol Stable (London: Goldsmiths Press, 2023), 14 and 20.

² During their visits, students would start their analysis by asking questions like: did the scholar write at the kitchen table? Did she have her own office? Did she work from her partner’s desk? These benign questions analyzing scholarly production would eventually prompt students to answer more insightful ones such as: how did her experience balancing the demands of being a wife and mother influence her understanding of class and gender discrimination?

³ For resources on helping students locate digital maps, please consult the following: “Collections with Maps,” Library of Congress, accessed September 6, 2023, <https://www.loc.gov/maps/collections/>; David Rumsey, “David Rumsey Map Collection: Cartography Associates,” accessed September 6, 2023, <https://www.davidrumsey.com/view/view>; Google, “Google Maps,” accessed September 6, 2023, <https://www.google.com/maps>. For resources on helping students create their own maps, please consult the following: Mindmeister Labs, “Mind Meister,” accessed September 6, 2023, https://www.mindmeister.com/?utm_source=zapier.com&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=zapier/; CoggleIt Limited, “Coggle,” accessed September 6, 2023, <https://coggle.it/>; and Popplet, “Popplet,” accessed September 6, 2023, <https://www.popplet.com/>.

In addition to engaging with novel archival methods, students could experiment with the groundbreaking methods employed by these “ghosts” wherein students would interview audiences, record oral histories, or even conduct mini-ethnographic studies.⁴ Following in the footsteps of scholars highlighted in *The Ghost Reader*, like Marie Jahoda, Herta Herzog, and Eleanor Leacock, students would permit audiences to speak for themselves by completing a podcast assignment. This assignment invites students to select a perspective that adds to the course readings and then conduct initial secondary research. From this secondary research, students would identify an appropriate interview subject and develop relevant interview questions thereby allowing the interview subject to testify to their own experience. After listening to similar audio productions, the student would use audio editing tools, like the open-source Audacity, to splice together a podcast portraying this subject’s perspective and placing it into context within the secondary sources.

Parsing Power Dynamics: As a corollary to novel archival methods, another pedagogical application would ask students to conduct a contextual analysis by exploring why these novel methods are necessary in the first place. Students would conduct contextual work on the forces of power and its manifestations that these scholarly women fought against. For instance, many of the women highlighted in *The Ghost Reader* were facing or studied groups experiencing “economic and political injustice, state violence, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, sexism, and capitalism.”⁵ One student project might investigate the “Red Scare” and how its influence shaped production in a specific industry, while another student project might trace the sexism inherent in the unacknowledged role of women as “transcribers, editors, and faculty wives.”⁶ Both projects would use secondary research to provide an understanding as to how the surrounding context formed and constrained scholarly production.

Beyond employing alternative methods, the women in *The Ghost Reader* combatted power dynamics by creating female mentorship networks. One noticeable form of scholarly mentorship acknowledged in this text was between Leacock and Gene Weltfish. As such, another student project might exemplify the influence Weltfish had on Leacock’s thinking and therein illustrate how these networks functioned to combat power dynamics that silenced or distorted scholarly research. And if we consider mentorship more broadly as guidance and influence, students can further delineate these networks by outlining the social circulation of the scholarship produced by these women.⁷

⁴ For resources on “how to” guide students in producing podcasts, please consult the following: Nicole Daniels and Katherine Schulten, “Making a Podcast that Matters: A Guide with 21 Examples from Students,” *New York Times*, April 22, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/22/learning/making-a-podcast-that-matters-a-guide-with-examples-from-23-students.html> (accessed September 6, 2023); Justin Hicks, Laura Winnick, and Michael Gonchar, “Project Audio: Teaching Students How to Produce Their Own Podcasts,” *New York Times*, April 19, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/19/learning/lesson-plans/project-audio-teaching-students-how-to-produce-their-own-podcasts.html> (accessed September 6, 2023); Lauren Migaki and Andee Tagle, “How to Start a Podcast, According to the Pros at NPR,” *National Public Radio: Life Kit*, September 30, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/2021/06/22/1009098800/how-to-start-a-podcast-npr-advice> (accessed September 6, 2023); and National Public Radio, “Starting Your Podcast: A Guide for Students,” Student Podcast Challenge, last modified January 6, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2018/11/15/662070097/starting-your-podcast-a-guide-for-students>.

⁵ Hristova, Dorsten, and Stable, “Introduction,” 17.

⁶ Hristova, Dorsten, and Stable, “Introduction,” 22.

⁷ Jaqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch. *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012.

Foundations for New Scholarship: Taken together, the pedagogical use of novel research methods, contextual assignments, and the template provided by *The Ghost Reader*, will help those entering the field develop a more complete understanding of its history. Undoubtedly, by reading and engaging with this text, *The Ghost Reader* similarly creates a paradigm shift for those already steeped in the field. Following *The Ghost Reader*, new scholarship might take on a variety of forms—from tracing additional “ghosts” in other disciplines to acknowledging novel research methods thereby leading to different results.

Most important for students and instructors, *The Ghost Reader* provides a model (templates) and a map (contextual research and novel research methods) for continuing to reset the historical record so that it accurately reflects women’s contributions to scholarship. To this point, each chapter of *The Ghost Reader* functions as a template for additional efforts to recover women’s contributions by providing balanced biographical information about their academic, professional, and personal lives coupled with selections exhibiting their profound contributions. But not only does *The Ghost Reader* function as a template, it also functions as a map to chart additional recovery efforts by briefly contextualizing each excerpt which helps scholars and students, alike, ask further research questions. And lastly, the women profiled in *The Ghost Reader* often develop novel research methods which readers may employ and thereby further building upon and highlighting the contributions these women made to media studies.