



The BIG 6 Theories in Writing Studies Education*

*according to me

Phil Shaw, Rochester Institute of Technology, 2023

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Introduction

What is meant by “theory”

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“Big 6” Theories

You can describe the topic of the section here

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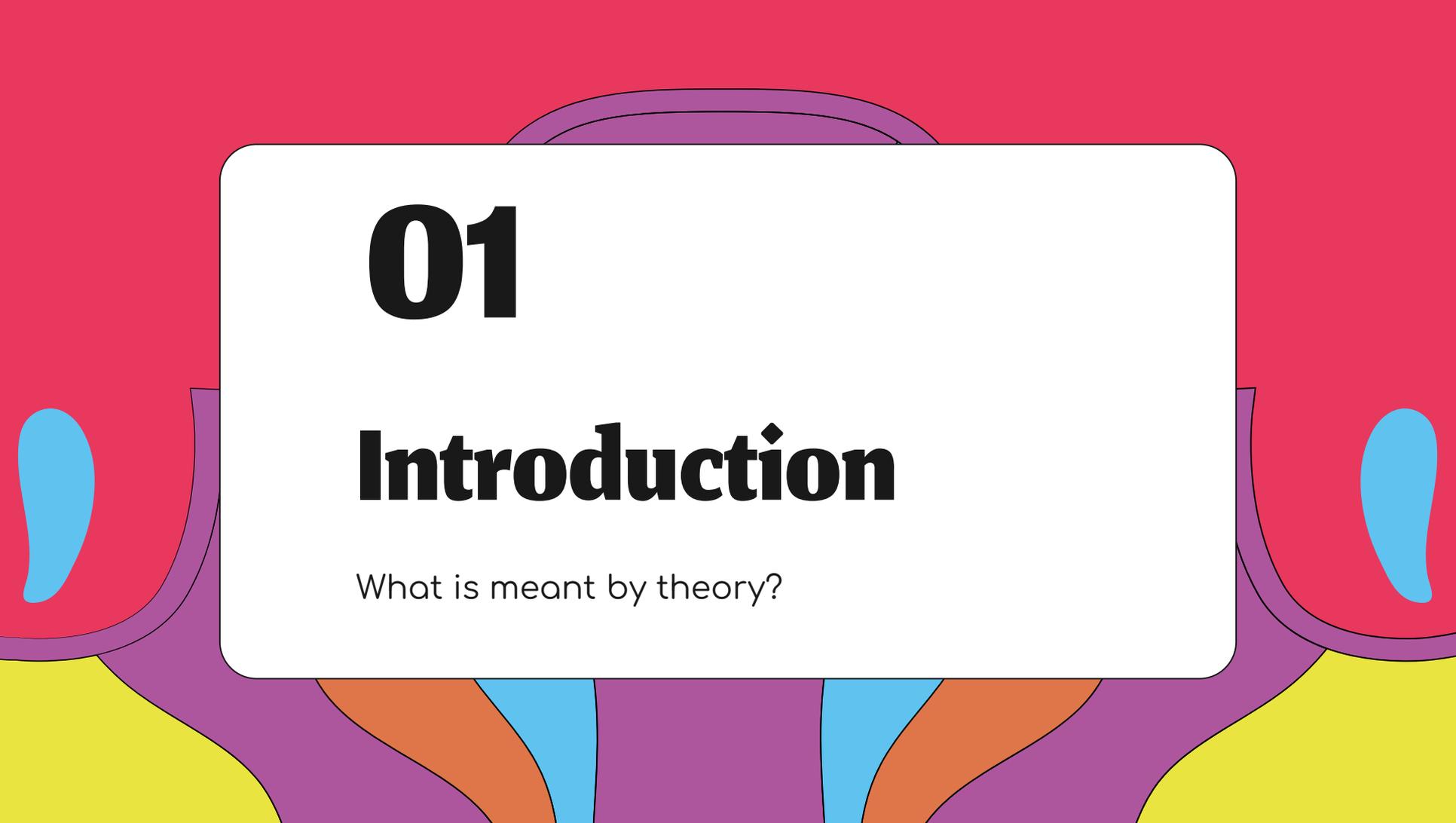
Rhetoric and Composition

As an evolving and maturing (?) discipline

04

Discussion

Review and Q&A



01

Introduction

What is meant by theory?

Two Definitions of Theory

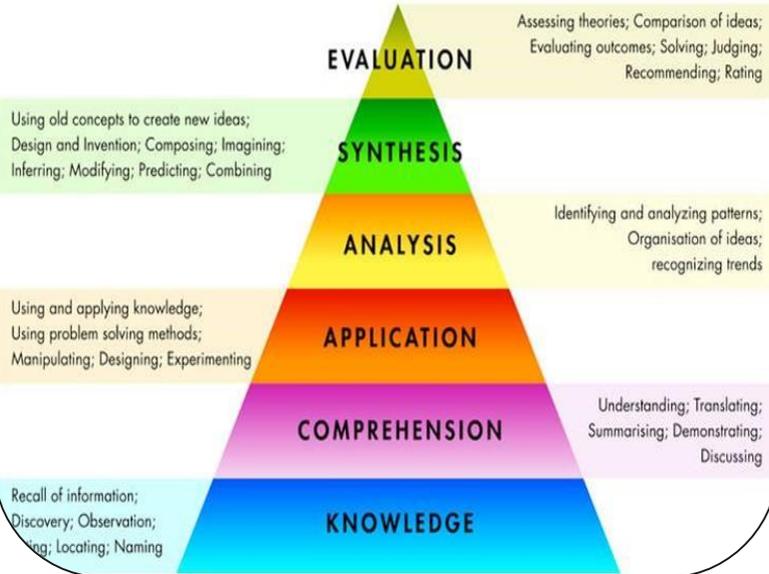
(Oxford Languages, 2023)

1. A set of principles on which the practice of an activity is based.
2. A [series of] idea[s] used to account for a situation or justify a course of action.

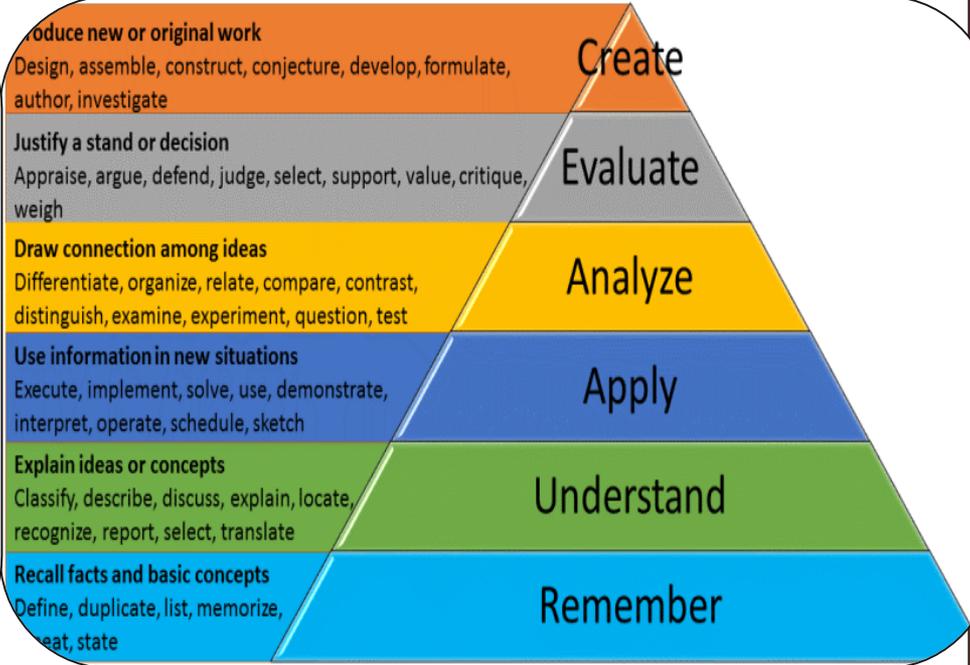


For example...

BLOOMS TAXONOMY



Bloom's Taxonomy
(Bloom, 1956)



Revised Bloom's Taxonomy
(Krathwohl, 2001)

For example...



Threshold Concept Theory

(Meyer & Land, 2003)

Criteria

Transformative
Irreversible
Troublesome
Integrative
Bounded
Discursive
Reconstitutive

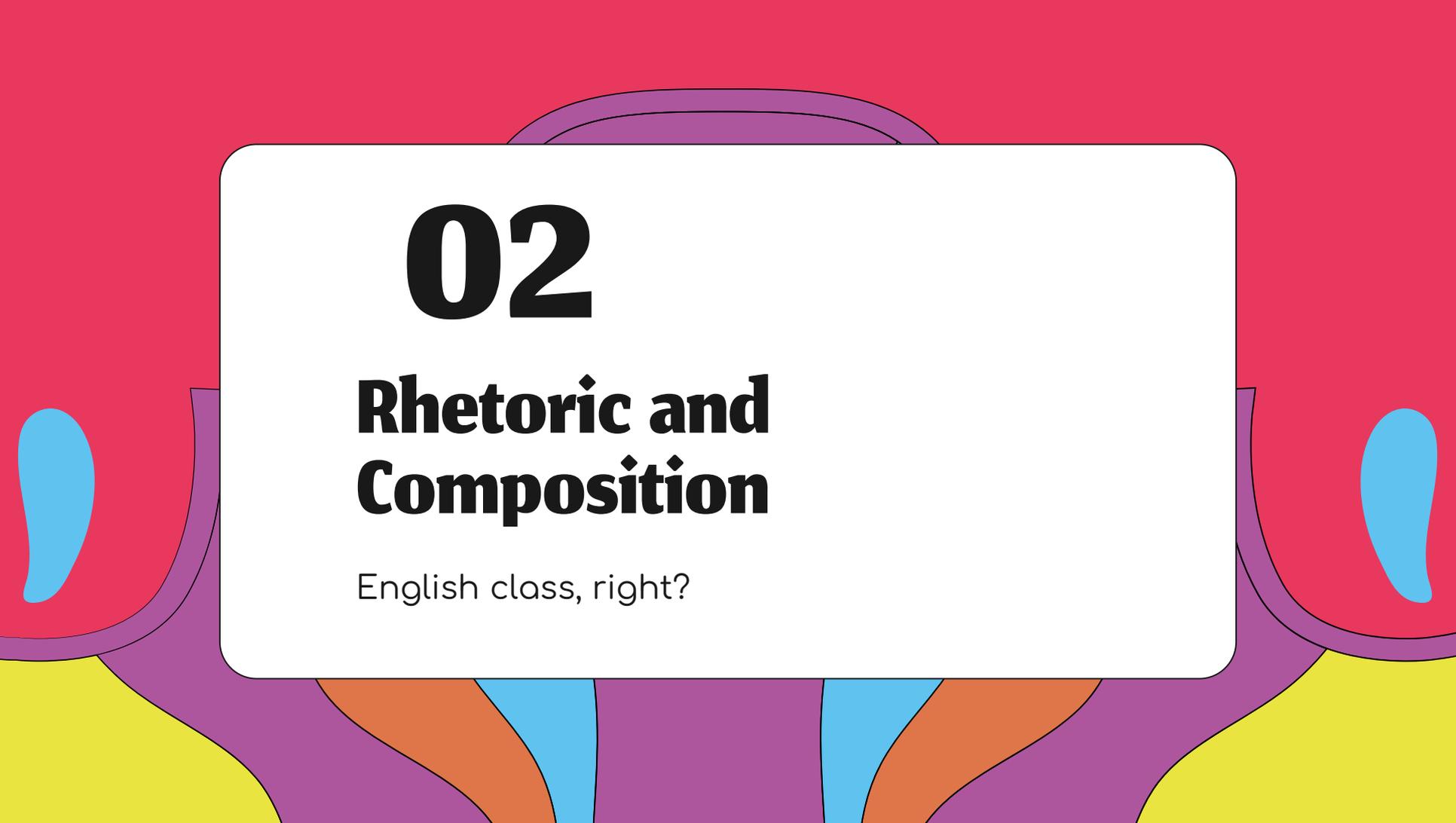
Theoretical Commitments

Researchers, educators, and scholars have beliefs about which theories are “true” or apply in a specific context

Understanding a person’s theoretical commitment can help you understand their ethos as well as why they do the things they do in the way they do them*

These beliefs are not always explicitly stated

A person’s theoretical commitment is reconstitutive



02

Rhetoric and Composition

English class, right?

What Rhet/Comp is not...



Not English

Literary forms,
analysis, and social
histories



Not Linguistics

Scientific study of
language, its rules
and structures



Not Communication

Sociocultural study
of human
communication
and behavior

Rhetoric and Composition



d/Discourse

Language in use (“d”),
and communities that
use language (“D”)



Multidisciplinary

Culture, writing in the
disciplines



Higher Education

First-year writing,
pedagogy



Activist

Students’ rights, civic
engagement



03

"Big 6" Theories*

*there are more but these are enough

Theories in Rhetoric and Composition



Classical Rhetoric

Oratory, social function, and citizenship



Positivism

Correctness, facts, and deliberate frameworks



Process

Stages, discovery, and portfolios



Cognitive

Knowledge types, recursion, and monitoring



Expressivist

Voice, authenticity, and assessment



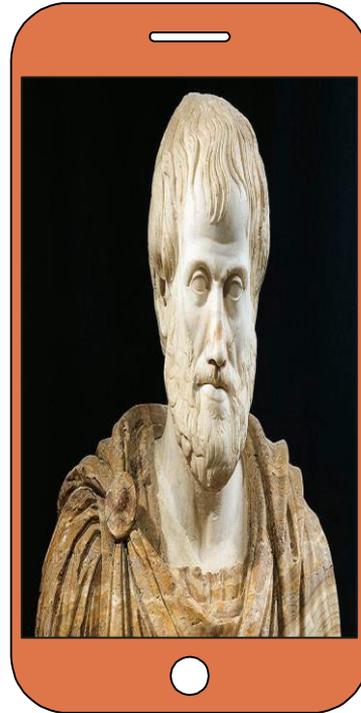
Socioepistemic

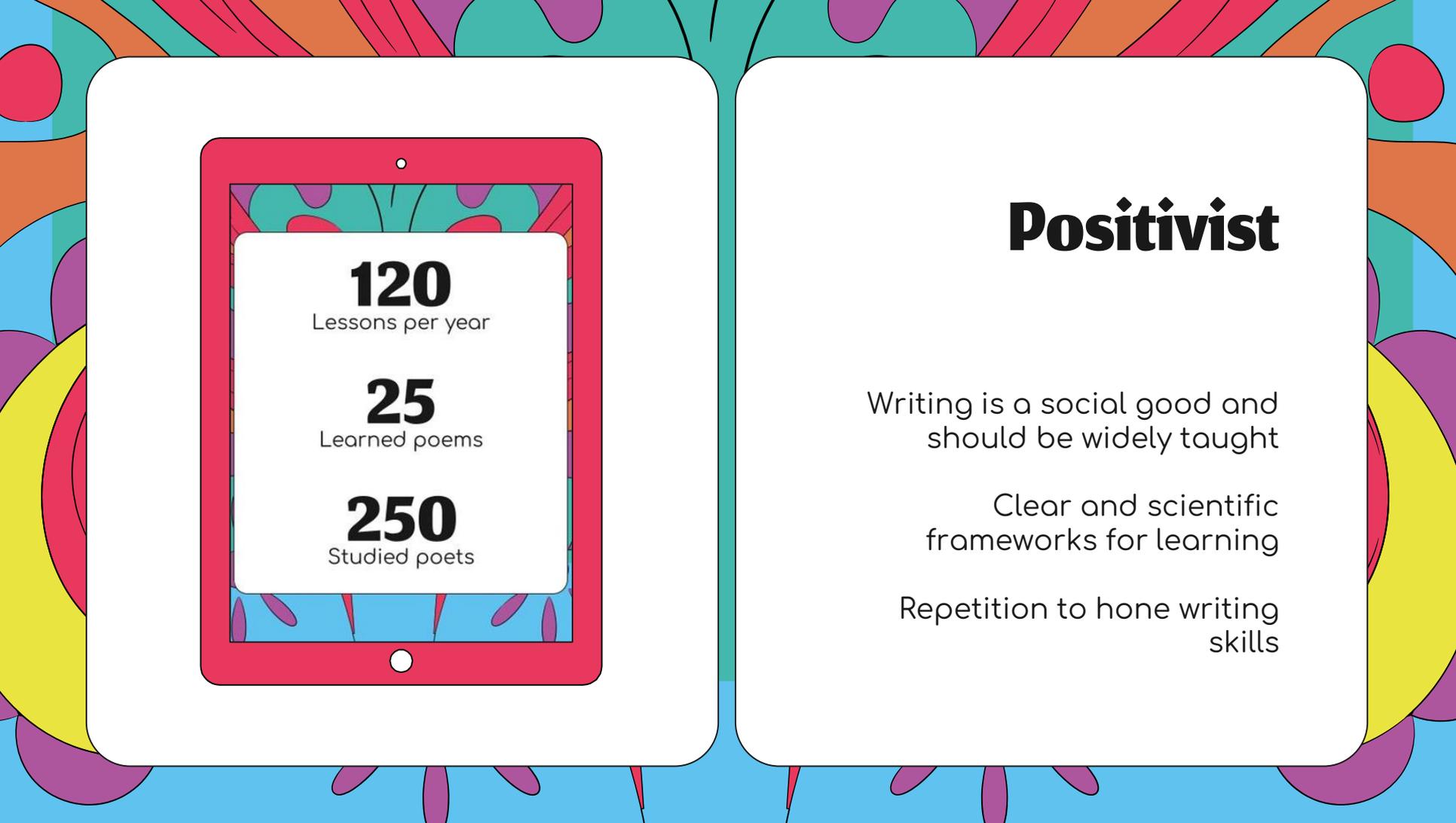
Identity, power, and constructivism

Classical Rhetoric

Sorted discourse forms by social function – political, legal, and ceremonial

Five stages of composition: Invention, Arrangement, Style, Memory, & Delivery





120

Lessons per year

25

Learned poems

250

Studied poets

Positivist

Writing is a social good and
should be widely taught

Clear and scientific
frameworks for learning

Repetition to hone writing
skills

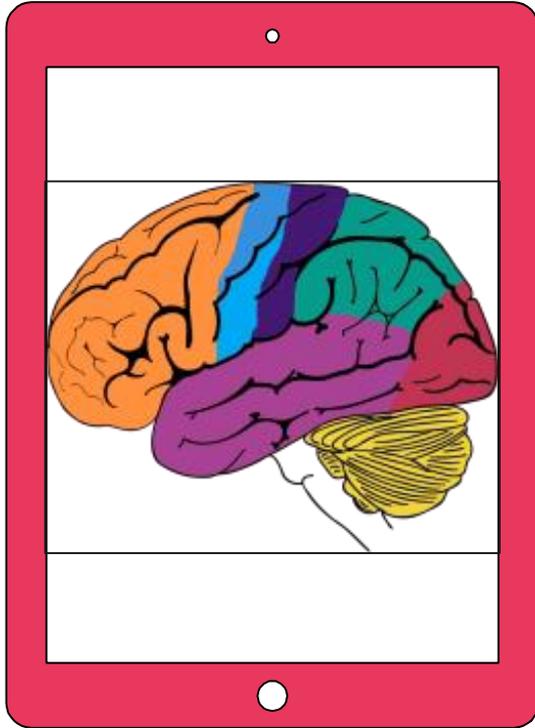
Process

Teach and assess the whole process, not just the final product

Pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing

Write-to-learn <-> Learn-to-write





Cognitivist

Recursive thought cycles
through Planning, Translating,
and Reviewing

Scientific tools and research

Types of writing knowledge:
factual, conceptual,
procedural, and
metacognitive

Expressivist

Voices: Original, Primary, and Acquired

The writer matters more than the audience or genre conventions

Authenticity through honest expression



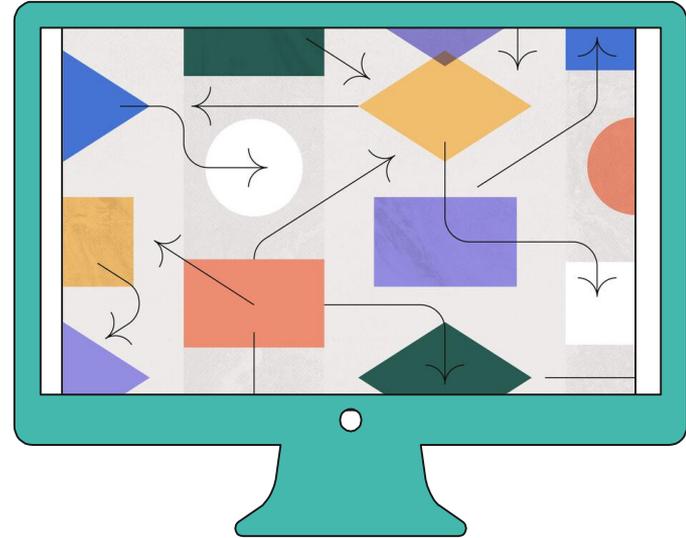
Socioepistemic

Knowledge is constructed and distributed through writing

Power is pervasive and systemic

Progressive education goals

Writers should address social issues



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04

Discussion

Review and Q&A

Two activities



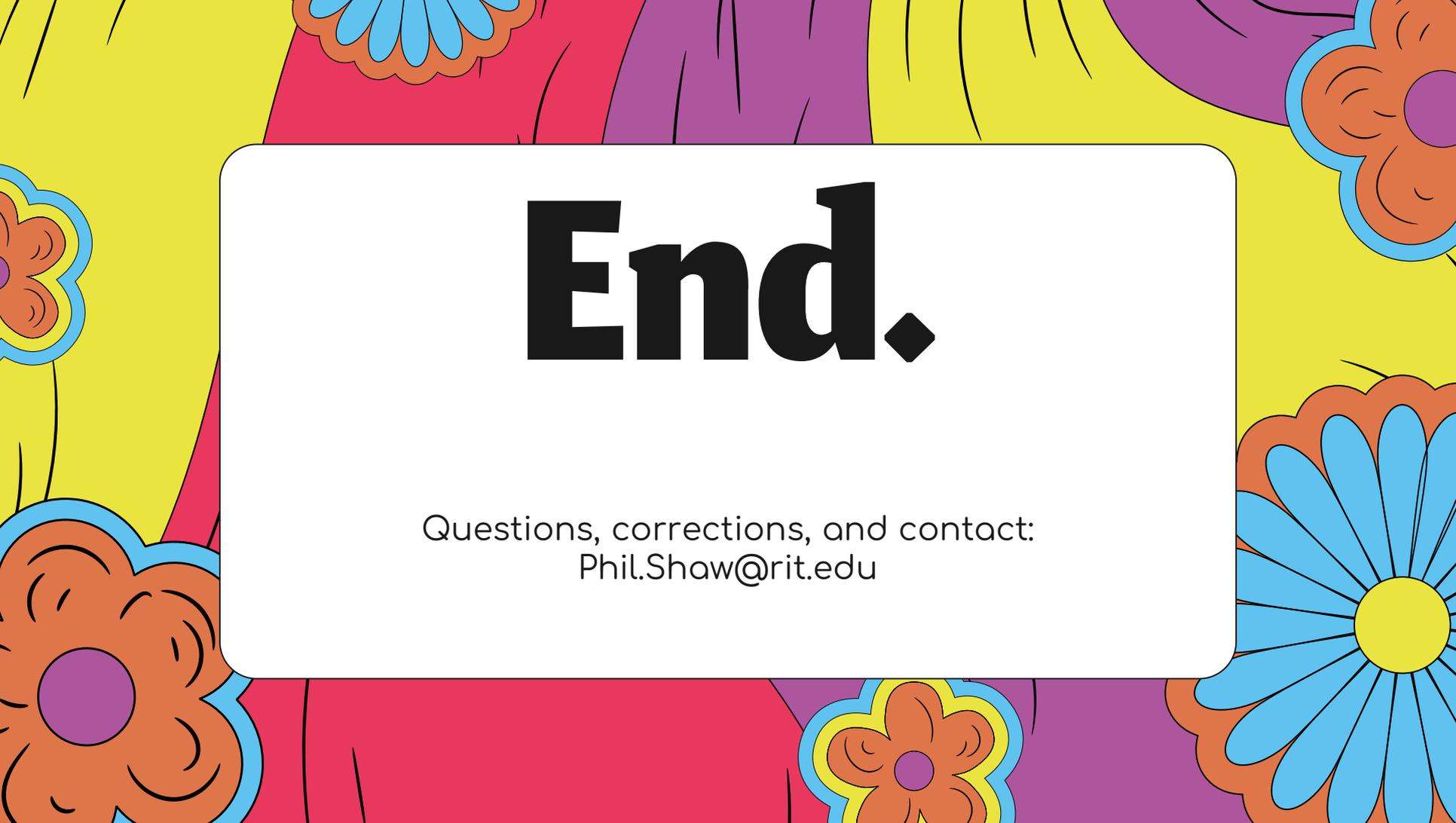
Identify

Which of the big six theories do you most identify with? Why?



Trouble

Which of the theories do you believe might be problematic?
In what context?



End.

Questions, corrections, and contact:
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