Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee want instructors to see discourse anew, through the eyes of ancient rhetorics. Thus, *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, 3rd ed. (ARCS) offers a markedly refreshing approach to composition instruction at a time when most other textbooks are deep in the trenches of postmodern ideologies. The theories expressed in ARCS are not new; in fact, they are the oldest theories we have on record. They are shaped by Aristotle, Cicero, Quintillian—to name only a few of the major players. But Crowley and Hawhee illuminate these ideas in a way that proves that ancient practices endure, even in the contemporary classroom.

The first chapter offers 32+ pages on the history of rhetoric to help illuminate the background for the upcoming theories. Although my students initially sigh and groan at the prospect of a discussion so heavily laden with history and philosophy, the information is concise and eases students into the notion of rhetoric, a term deeply misunderstood or completely unknown to almost all those new faces. This opening chapter, like all others, ends with a list of relevant exercises for instructors to consider and manipulate for practice applying these concepts to their students’ own writing.

Part I of ARCS is devoted to invention with chapters that focus on kairos, stasis theory, the commonplaces, extrinsic proofs and the three argumentative appeals—pathos, ethos and logos. My students and I spend the majority of our semester digging our way in and out of these chapters. But because my department promotes invention by way of
stasis theory, this particular chapter (c. 3) demands the largest focus of all. And it is a chapter packed full with theoretical discussions of the purposes of stasis as well as help with applying the stasis heuristic to research topics typical in any composition course. I do supplement this chapter with visuals that help break down the invention process according to the theory of stasis, visuals that offer a broader overview of the process to reduce the threat of feeling overwhelmed by the depth of inquiry. In all my hunting, I’ve found Crowley and Hawhee’s introduction to stasis theory as a heuristic to be one of the most complete.

My students have responded favorably to allowing the theories of stasis to help guide their inquiry into any subject, proving that Crowley & Hawhee were right to breathe new life into a forgotten approach to teaching the invention of rhetoric. My students also find the hierarchical levels of stasis a helpful organizational guide. I ask them to write separate essays using the same chosen topic and design each assignment around the levels of stasis, an idea borrowed and adapted from the text itself. Students begin their linguistic journey with a *definitional/conjectural* essay and move through each stage, maturing their topic into more advanced levels of argument (*evaluative, causal*), finally culminating their work into a *policy* letter to a real-world audience. Their compilation of these revised essays (with heavy attention on a clear cohesive focus) serves as their final research essay requirement. This process helps show how applying proper attention to each stasis mode will help ensure a thoughtful academic essay. To assist instructors and students with the application of this process, Crowley and Hawhee are considerate enough to offer two full examples proving the success of such an application. They take two modern issues commonly argued, two that the students are
sure to be familiar with—hate speech on campus and abortion—and show how a student rhetor can work through the stasis heuristic to determine exactly where the core of their issue exists (thereby warranting the most attention in their treatment of that issue) by asking a series of relevant, systematic questions.

Part II of ARCS moves through the sophistic topics and the ancient notion of arrangement. This section receives the least attention in my own course. But we do discuss the ancient approach to arrangement and draw parallels to our more modern adaptations of organization and its accessible application when the need calls.

Part III, Style, Memory and Delivery, offers a refreshing look at the complexity of ornamentation. This ancient notion of style has too long been buried under modern headings of format, yet fits nicely into any writing course—research or otherwise. I am a strong advocate that research, as well as any other non-fictional text, has as much claim to stylistic concerns as fictional texts. And with Crowley & Hawhee’s attention to the rhetorical devices of style coupled with an extensive chapter on imitation, I’ve found the resources needed to restore style to its rightful place as one of the major components of rhetorical study. Ancient students of rhetoric spent much of their time taking admirable pieces of texts and imitating the grammatical complexities, among other things, of their sentence structure. This practice closely resembles our modern notion of sentence combining techniques to improve the sophistication of prose. With imitation, however, the student may not necessarily be able to articulate the dissection of bell hooks’ line: “This work came together in a slow way. Always something would get in the way—relationships ending, exile, loneliness, some recently discovered pain—and I had to hurt again, hurt myself all the way away from writing, re-writing, putting the book together,”
yet they are able to imitate her style, her cadence, her extraordinary use of language using their own research topic (my own sample imitation: We wrote carefully. Aware that grammar might halt our creativity—compound sentences, dependent clauses, possessive pronouns—but we had to try again, try our hand at research writing all the way back to introducing, narrating, concluding the argumentative essay). Even those phobic of grammatical terms can enjoy the benefits of stylistic imitation. In my experience, the results are promising in that students have fun with this practice. I only discuss the successful ways they have used participial phrases, absolutes and rhetorical devices such as polysyndeton after the exercise is over. All the necessary tools—examples to use and terminology to incorporate—have been provided by Crowley and Hawhee in their chapter on imitation (c. 14) in ARCS.

Crowley & Hawhee indirectly criticize some key features of the linear approach of postmodern rhetoric and set out to resolve those shortcomings with a renewed insight into the practices of ancient rhetors. For example, ARCS does not accept the modern format of beginning a writing course with essays of “personal expression and mov[ing] outward into expository and persuasive modes” (xvi). Language is our most powerful tool in the instigation of social change and I share the doctrine of Crowley, Hawhee and many ancient rhetoricians—we all share a common responsibility to offer our educated opinions for the improvement of our societies. Crowley and Hawhee’s devotion to that goal are evident with the end of chapter exercises that focus on active involvement and relevant discussions on current issues threaded throughout the textbook. These issues include, among many other things, an evaluation of the failed ethos of Bob Dole when he spoke out against needless violence in Hollywood entertainment (174), or a discussion of
the rhetorical intimacy created when a rhetor uses the first person “we” such as Victoria A. Bunsworth did in her article on a Gay Pride march in *Curve* magazine (186), or even the illumination of the effective use of the example put forth by Justice Thomas as he attacked cross-burning (124). Every example included in ARCS has a current relevance to students because they live out these same arguments in their own daily lives and every example proves the saturation of ancient theories of rhetoric that are present in all we read and hear.

One additional distinction of this textbook is that I don’t have to follow any prescribed order. I typically begin my rhetoric/composition course with a brief history of rhetoric (c. 1) and then move to a unit on evaluating rhetoric—the perfect chance to explore the relevance of the chapters on ethos, pathos, logos and extrinsic proofs (c. 5, 6, 7 & 8). I then move the students into the bulk of the coursework—invention—and make my way slowly through the chapters on kairos, stasis theory and the commonplaces (c. 2, 3 & 4). The final chapters on arrangement and style (c. 10 & 11) add flavor to the course once we have drafted a pool of texts to play with. I’m able to use pieces of ARCS’ progymnasmata (or rhetorical exercises, c. 15)) along the way, as well, for practice and experience with language, largely through imitation, for the purpose of building copia. These exercises are designed to build successively, first asking students to compose fables or tales for their argumentative topic, then moving on to more complex exercises of confirmation and refutation, thesis or comparison. Each can be utilized according to the needs dictated by the individual course and all are helpful tools that any student can take with them into future rhetorical situations.
Crowley and Hawhee’s use of the first person “we” is another notable feature of ARCS. They set out to avoid using any traces of a tyrannical, authoritative voice dictating the rules of rhetoric and, with this effort, succeeded brilliantly. Instead of sounding haughty, the authors allow the information to feel accessible and debatable.

For some instructors, the notion of adhering to a course grounded in ancient rhetorical practices may seem disproportionately theoretical. But there’s no need to worry that the theory is not applicable to practical concerns of all writers, advanced or novice. I have chosen to use this text in my Rhetoric and Writing: Argument and Research course designed for undergraduate students at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Crowley and Hawhee prove the accessibility of this information to instructors and students alike in ARCS by applying the themes themselves to modern argumentative concerns. For undergraduates who seek a writing course to satisfy a requirement, or graduate students beginning their theoretical inquiry or even for instructors eager to sharpen their skills, *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students* is the optimal place to begin.