



Educating the New Southern Woman: Speech, Writing, and Race at the Public Women's Colleges, 1884-1945 (Studies in Rhetorics and Feminisms)

David Gold, Catherine L Hobbs

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From the end of Reconstruction through World War II, a network of public colleges for white women flourished throughout the South. Founded primarily as vocational colleges to educate women of modest economic means for life in the emerging “new” South, these schools soon transformed themselves into comprehensive liberal arts–industrial institutions, proving so popular that they became among the largest women’s colleges in the nation. In this illuminating volume, David Gold and Catherine L. Hobbs examine rhetorical education at all eight of these colleges, providing a better understanding of not only how women learned to read, write, and speak in American colleges but also how they used their education in their lives beyond college.

With a collective enrollment and impact rivaling that of the Seven Sisters, the schools examined in this study—Mississippi State College for Women (1884), Georgia State College for Women (1889), North Carolina College for Women (1891), Winthrop College in South Carolina (1891), Alabama College for Women (1896), Texas State College for Women (1901), Florida State College for Women (1905), and Oklahoma College for Women (1908)—served as important centers of women’s education in their states, together educating over a hundred thousand students before World War II and contributing to an emerging professional class of women in the South. After tracing the establishment and evolution of these institutions, Gold and Hobbs explore education in speech arts and public speaking at the colleges and discuss writing instruction, setting faculty and departmental goals and methods against larger institutional, professional, and cultural contexts. In addition to covering the various ways the public women’s colleges prepared women to succeed in available occupations, the authors also consider how women’s education in rhetoric and writing affected their career choices, the role of race at these schools, and the legacy of public women’s colleges in relation to the history of women’s education and contemporary challenges in the teaching of rhetoric and writing.

The experiences of students and educators at these institutions speak to important conversations among scholars in rhetoric, education, women’s studies, and history. By examining these previously unexplored but important institutional sites, *Educating the New Southern Woman* provides a richer and more complex history of women’s rhetorical education and experiences.

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