Crossing the Great Divide: Critical Thinking and Writing in the Majors

Third Biennial Conference on Critical Thinking and Writing

Sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences, QUWAC, and the Research and Writing Institute at Quinnipiac University

Friday, November 19th & Saturday, November 20th, 2010

Rocky Top Student Center
305 Sherman Avenue, Hamden, CT

Friday, November 19

2:00-5:00 p.m. Meeting of NEWACC (The Northeast Writing Across the Curriculum Consortium)
Room 303

5:30-6:30 p.m. Cocktail Hour and Registration
Dining Hall

6:30-7:30 p.m. Dinner
The Annex

7:30-9:00 p.m. Reframing Literacy: Film presentation and discussion
Moderated by Sally Mitchell and Julian Ingle
Thinking Writing, Queen Mary University of London

Saturday, November 20

8:00-9:00 a.m. Registration and Breakfast Buffet
Dining Hall
Session 1
Finding the Divide
9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

PANEL SESSION 1A: Room 311

“Teaching Scientific Writing through IMRD: A Case Study of Course Development and Outcomes”

Leslie Anne Roldan, Jane Kokernak, Neil Lerner, and Marilee Ogren
Writing Across the Curriculum, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The scientific IMRD paper is a productive assignment for WAC/WID courses because it introduces students to the practice of writing up scientific research and to the rhetorical qualities of each section of the report. This panel presents the design and evolution of an undergraduate scientific communications course in biology that is built upon an IMRD assignment. The course is used as a model for other WAC/WID courses in the university and provides a site for research into the development of students and instructors. Coding of instructor comments across rhetorical and technical types illuminates how professional background shapes a pedagogical response to scientific writing and identifies opportunities for cross-training among WAC/WID instructors. Together, the panelists demonstrate how teaching the IMRD structure of a scientific research paper offers new possibilities for course development, student learning, and instructional practices.

PANEL SESSION 1B: Room 303

“From Introduction to Capstone: Using Writing to Foster Critical, Disciplinary Thinking in Psychology”

Carrie Bulger, Sandra Soucie, Angela Walker, and Sharlene Walbaum
Psychology, Quinnipiac University

Writing is crucial to effective communication in psychology. At the professional level, psychologists must master expository writing to develop theoretical and empirical arguments, propose new ideas, describe and interpret research findings, and critique research reported by others. Mastery in our discipline, as expressed in writing, is closely tied to clear and logical thinking. Further, writing is often done in collaboration with others. Our major is designed to develop these expository writing skills beginning with the introductory course and culminating with our capstone Senior Thesis. This panel will present strategies and techniques that use various forms of writing in four different courses, all designed to foster critical, disciplinary thinking and move toward expository writing.
“Creating Divisions Where None Exist: How the Rhetoric of Writing Instruction May Reinforce Bad Teaching”

Phyllis Benay, Robert Kostick, Kirsti Sandy, Kate Tirabassi
English and Graphic Design, Keene State College

In higher education, we often speak of writing in our individual disciplines as fundamentally unique in substance and style. However, does reinforcing what could be construed as divisive educational rhetoric—writing-in-the-disciplines vs. writing-across-the-curriculum, critical thinking skills vs. critical writing skills—ultimately deter us from effectively teaching writing to undergraduates? This panel discussion invites the audience to struggle with how our vocabulary might unwittingly reinforce the very divides we hope our students will ultimately overcome. In 2006, Keene State College, a small, liberal arts college in southern New Hampshire, replaced its traditional first-year English composition course with a very different requirement aptly called Thinking and Writing. This new course taught by faculty from diverse disciplines focuses on a wide variety of specialized topics, but nevertheless shares one powerful common denominator: a commitment to a substantial, complex writing project completed through a series of drafts produced throughout the semester. Using examples of student writing, assessment results from this new course, and faculty conversation from ten years of intensive workshops and seminars about the teaching of writing, we will demonstrate how a shared vocabulary about writing positively impacts students’ work.

Critical Thinking and Writing in the Sciences: From the Agora to the Online Community

Les Perelman, WAC, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
“From Aristotle to IMRaD: How ‘Teaching to Forms’ Can Foster Critical Thinking in Science and Engineering”

This presentation will argue that the standard forms in Science and Engineering already exist in the topoi of classical rhetoric. The basic structure of the IMRaD paper contains most of the elements of Ciceronian forensic rhetoric. Just as classical rhetoric was used a bridge to philosophical investigation, its modern descendants can be used as tools to promote critical thinking. However, just as Classical Rhetoric in its later evolution petrified into forms that restricted thought, so too can the standard discourse genres of science and engineering. The presentation will conclude with a few famous examples of this phenomenon, including documents connected to the Three-Mile-Island Disaster.
Karen Pepper, WAC, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
“Getting Results from Biology Students (and Ideas for Teaching Writing)”

Scientific writing begins with the concrete: experimental data presented, both visually and verbally, in the Results section of the research report. Teaching the writing of the Results section may be instructive for teaching writing across the disciplines. Scientific research reports comprise four main sections: Introduction, Material and Methods, Results, Discussion. The Introduction and Discussion together constitute an argument framing the experimental core. The Results section provides evidence supporting the principal conclusion, or thesis, of that argument. In the Results, the visual elements (figures and tables) are described by the text. That description is neutral but not camera-esse: what is worthy of notice, in the writer’s view, is pointed out, so selection and judgment come into play. The descriptive passages are tied together by a connecting thread guiding the reader from one visual element to the next; this thread lays out the experimental strategy. Writing this section requires close attention to detail and an awareness of both what is and what is not there. Problematic for students learning to write arguments in general are both the selection of appropriate evidence and the fit between evidence and thesis. An understanding of scientific writing, particularly the Results section, might illuminate new directions for teaching these aspects of argument.

Harrison Carpenter, Ecology and Evolution, University of Colorado-Boulder
“Scripting the Process: Reflections on Critical Thinking in Disciplinary Online Writing Instruction”

The concept of a process script, which builds upon the work of Vygotsky (1978, 1986) and Friere (1970, 1987), has long been given attention by writing teachers. As productive as our attention has been, we have only begun to pay attention to process scripts’ uses in settings other than traditional, onsite classrooms. This is surprising, given our attention to writing in the academic disciplines (WID) and online writing instruction (OWI). Our discussions of process scripts and the way(s) such scripts can foster critical thinking in disciplinary OWI have not been great in number. Based upon his reflection, the presenter will argue that, in order for OWI to functionally contribute to fostering students’ critical disciplinary awareness, teachers should make use of process scripts. Yet, teachers must develop a familiarity with writing conventions that encourage dialogue in OWI. Some strategies have been suggested (Hewitt & Ehmann, 2004; Warnock, 2009); in conclusion, he will describe the strategies he made use of, in order to offer insight into their usefulness in disciplinary OWI.

PANEL SESSION 1E: Room 317

Marking Borders: Defining Disciplinary Thinking, Writing, and Modes of Inquiry

Edward D’Angelo, Philosophy, Quinnipiac University
“Teaching Critical Thinking Skills to Undergraduates”
There are different conceptions about the nature of critical thinking. These will be briefly presented with the emphasis on the skills that can be taught to undergraduates that enhance their ability to think critically. The focus will be on the following skills: defining key terms, recognizing and evaluating assumptions, using evidence to justify claims and constructing logically consistent arguments. It will be demonstrated how these skills can be applied in philosophy, political science, literature, and history.

Patrick Ryan, Writing and Creative Process, Western Connecticut State University
“Inquiry and Writing in the Disciplines”

In most general-education college writing courses, critical thinking is defined in terms of informal reasoning, that is, rhetoric and argumentation applying basic principles of dialectic to questions and issues of relevance in the public forum. Such approaches to critical reasoning are especially appropriate for general education, a primary purpose of which is to prepare collegians for civic and communal engagement. However, critical thinking as dialectic works as only partial preparation for writing across the curriculum because professors in their departments are concerned more specifically with writing as a tool in the processes of inquiry characteristic of their disciplines. At this point in the evolution of writing-across-the-curriculum programs, professors must recognize that critical thinking in the disciplines is defined in terms of their peculiar modes of inquiry. In this presentation, preliminary differentiations among modes of inquiry in the humanities, sciences, and social sciences will be made. Several writing assignments designed by professors in the disciplines will be described.

Suzanne Lane, WAC, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
“Falling Through the Cracks: Students Between Genres in Interdisciplinary Courses”

Many introductory humanities and social science classes are considered “interdisciplinary”—from the now standard Introductions to Women’s or Gender studies, African-American or Ethnic studies, to newer courses on topics such as Globalization. These courses are also often designated writing-intensive, and fulfill requirements in a gen-ed framework. From the perspective of WAC pedagogy, these courses raise fascinating issues: e.g., Does “interdisciplinary” in this context mean “pre-disciplinary,” as the placement of these courses in a gen-ed curriculum suggests? Does it instead mean, as the term implies, between disciplines? Or does it mean, in theory or in practice, “multidisciplinary”? What are the implications for teaching students to write in interdisciplinary courses? In order to address these questions, this paper examines the assignments in a writing-intensive, interdisciplinary Introduction to Black Studies course. It examines in detail the questions about disciplinarity raised by how the instructors attempted to design assignments that would link the materials and concerns of different disciplines (in this case, linguistics, anthropology, and literature). The paper concludes by proposing a heuristic faculty can use to better assess the challenges students face in writing in interdisciplinary gen-ed courses, and to therefore develop more thorough instruction to help students face these challenges.

Patricia Portanova, Composition, University of New Hampshire
“Community-Service Writing Across the Curriculum: CSW as a Site of Legitimate Peripheral Participation in Disciplinary Thinking”
This presentation will discuss ways in which community-service writing (CSW) projects can introduce students to critical thinking in the disciplines through situated learning or legitimate peripheral participation. The presenter will share her own teaching experience with embedded CSW projects in a first-year writing course, as well as offer examples of CSW projects in courses across the curriculum. To frame her argument, she will draw from Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger’s work on legitimate peripheral participation which is an analytic viewpoint of learning as situated in communities of practice. Novice participants, such as students, enter communities of practice on the periphery. Students are given legitimate opportunities for peripheral participation through CSW projects where expert participants (instructors) can offer guidance and mentorship. To support this theory, the presenter will offer assignments, student comments, and other explicit examples from her CSW course and courses in other disciplines.

10:30 – 11:00 a.m.  Coffee Break/ Activity Lobby 307

Session 2
Negotiating the Divide
11a.m. to 12:30p.m

PANEL SESSION 2A: Room  303

“Crossing the Great Divide: What We Can Learn about Critical Thinking and Disciplinary Thinking in the Majors from Writing Fellows

Anne Ellen Geller and Lauren Williams, English, St. John’s University
Susan Dinitz and Susanmarie Harrington, English, University of Vermont

An increasingly common collaboration between Writing Center and WAC/WID programs is the Peer Mentor or Writing Fellow program, in which experienced tutors are connected to classes in order to support student writers. While writing fellows programs have existed for over 25 years, there have been few studies of what happens in these multi-faceted collaborations. Writing fellow programs become a site where issues of divide crossing are paramount – more advanced undergraduate writing fellows have made the same journey their peers have made (or are making) from general education courses to disciplinary courses. This panel will describe research projects from two writing fellow programs that offer insights about the teaching of writing and its relationship to critical and disciplinary thinking in the majors.

PANEL SESSION 2B: Room 311
“Critical Thinking and Writing at Georgia State University: Three Years and Counting”

George Pullman, Brennan Collins, Angela Hall Godsey, Jennifer Lawrence and Marti Singer; English, Critical Thinking through Writing, and WAC; Georgia State University

Three years ago Georgia State University started the process of implementing a two course in every major requirement regarding critical thinking and writing. Two years ago they presented their initial observations at this conference and much has changed and much has not since then. Now that the CTW initiative is fully implemented, they would like to share some of their preliminary findings. The panelists will discuss how the definitions of critical thinking have and have not changed, review CTW assessment data, the positive effects of CTW on the University’s long -standing WAC program, how problems encountered in the early stages of the initiative have been met, some of the challenges perceived on the horizon, and the rewards enjoyed by instructors in CTW classes in the English Department.

PANEL SESSION 2C: Room 310

Beyond the Ivory Tower: Using Critical Thinking and Writing as a Bridge to Problem Solving in the Work Place

Lydia Volaitis, Mary Caulfield, and Janis Melvold, Mechanical Engineering, MIT

“Borrowing Business Practices to Teach Communication Skills”

The panelists will discuss two novel approaches to teaching communication skills to engineering undergraduates: Agile Product Development (ADP) software development models and “Letters of Transmittal” documents created in response to corporate request for proposal (RFP). Both techniques come from business consulting practices, and both show promise in helping students contextualize their projects and assignments. Assignments that replicate Agile Product Development scenarios require students to work in teams, assessing the implications of design choices and the relationship between individual features and complete systems. This team environment requires skills in description, justification, and audience assessment. To be successful, software developers need to understand not only what they are developing, but why. The second approach, using “Letters of Transmittal,” illustrates how framing an assignment can provoke a radical change in how undergraduates process and contextualize it. In a classroom “experiment”, they reframed Mechanical Engineering laboratory assignments as corporate RFPs. Doing this forced students to contextualize their projects quite differently than when the same projects were presented as laboratory assignments to be read and graded by their professor. The panelists will share their insights about the benefits of these approaches.

Renee Gravois Lee, Marketing, Sam Houston University

“Building a Critical Thinking Path toward Stronger Data Analysis and Writing”
No matter what career path students pursue, they must learn to critically analyze research, interpret data, identify key findings and insights, and use those insights to develop recommendations. Equally important is students’ ability to clearly and persuasively communicate those insights and recommendations to the intended audience(s). More than just a means to an end, these rhetorical moves require a variety of critical thinking skills that students need to become cognitively aware of, so that they can transfer these moves from the classroom to the workplace. This presentation will focus on a “Topline” class assignment designed as a way for students to gain hands-on experience analyzing data and distilling it into a useful written outcome. The presenter will provide an overview of the assignment, share key learning outcomes, and offer assignment alternatives that can be adapted across different courses, decision-making scenarios, and class lengths. Through this project, the work students do along the data→analysis→writing path allows them to grapple with the difficult tasks of interpreting research and communicating key insights, thus building their critical thinking skills. They realize that deep and thoughtful analysis leads to stronger writing. Essentially they learn that the better the process, the better the product.

PANEL SESSION 2D: Room 316

Beyond General Education:
Making Transitions to Critical Thinking and Writing in the Majors

Michael Cripps, English Composition, University of New England
“Writing in the Core and in the Majors: What the Consortium for the Study of Writing in College Questions Can (and Cannot) Tell Us”

In 2008, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), in partnership with the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA), piloted a set of 27 writing questions as a supplement to the NSSE. Available to schools participating in NSSE and joining the Consortium for the Study of Writing in College (CSWC), these questions have been asked at well over 100 colleges and universities. Three NSSE rounds after the pilot CSWC administration, Writing Program Administrators at a number of schools are beginning to share with the WAC community some findings from local administrations. Drawing from both local and national data from the NSSE and CSWC, the WAC Coordinator and Writing Program Coordinator at a mid-sized, urban public school will explore what 2009 data can tell us about writing practices in the lower-level general education core and in the upper-level of the curriculum, or in the majors. In addition to surveying freshmen and seniors, the standard NSSE methodology, the presenter’s institution sought (and received) permission from NSSE to survey students in WI-designated courses on campus. These data, broken down by course level, offer a window into students’ writing and thinking practices within specific levels of courses. Additionally, given the nature of the CSWC questions, the data offer a window into the writing pedagogies of faculty throughout the institution.

Dan Fraizer, English/Writing, Springfield College
“Coaching Transfer after FYC”
Critics have argued that the General Writing Skills Instruction (GWSI) model of First Year Composition (FYC) be transformed in order to better prepare students for future writing expectations. Such a course might introduce knowledge transfer strategies such as reflection and genre analysis in order to expand awareness of the various writing situations students will encounter. The presenter will share data collected on student perceptions of course content in several traditional GWSI/FYC classes, then discuss his experiences as he followed eight students from this cohort into their first semester as post-FYC sophomores. The presenter will discuss the impact of reflection, genre analysis, and bridging strategies on the transition period between FYC and more advanced courses in either general education sequences or major course work when they are experiencing a range of cross-disciplinary expectations.

Patricia Morelli, First-Year Learning Communities/Composition, University of Hartford
“Bridging the Great Divide: Critical Thinking and Writing in Learning Communities”

FIGs (First-year Interest Groups) are learning communities that link two courses whose curriculum and pedagogy are coordinated in cross-disciplinary Integrated Learning Blocks. For example, the Psychology FIG at the University of Hartford merges introductory Psychology and First-year Writing courses; the two class rosters are identical. Other University of Hartford FIGs have included students who are Physical Therapy majors. Pairing writing and disciplinary courses addresses common goals of promoting overall academic success, immersion in the major, a sense of community, as well as academic and social support. The UHart FIG program has succeeded for 12 years, and in fall 2006, the Psychology FIG was expanded from one semester to a full academic year, a significant benchmark in Learning Community design. The presenter will discuss key elements of the program, including the use of “Integrated Learning Blocks,” which involve a series of cross-disciplinary assignments that hold students accountable for proficiency in the overlapping discourses of analytical reading, persuasive writing, civil public speaking, and insightful critical thinking, as required in both the composition classroom and in the social sciences.

Alexandria Peary, Composition/Rhetoric, Daniel Webster College
“Creative Writing WAC: Using the Imagination to Bridge Critical and Disciplinary Thinking”

One of the most effective ways to help students master critical and disciplinary thinking is paradoxically the use of creative writing. Although creative writing may initially seem removed from academic discourse, it can teach students disciplinary thinking and content in ways not always possible with conventionally academic writing tasks such as the research paper or discipline-specific genres. Whereas WAC that employs a discipline’s genres implicitly communicates that discipline’s thinking through its conventions, creative writing WAC asks students to apply a new set of conventions (i.e.: those of fiction writing) to disciplinary conventions. Creative writing WAC thus functions as an additional lens on the discipline, helping students to critically consider its disciplinary thinking. Creative writing WAC can be used in diverse disciplinary fields, including technical or scientific majors, as well as majors in the social sciences. This presentation will explore the benefits of creative writing WAC for critical and disciplinary thinking, as well as discuss how to implement such projects in team partnerships with faculty from across the disciplines. Topics will include staging of creative
writing WAC assignments, working with faculty to design fiction-writing brainstorming prompts for students, utilizing peer feedback, and assessing creative projects.

PANEL SESSION 2E: Room 317

Errands in the Wilderness: New Ways of Mapping the Disciplinary Terrain

Steven Pearlman, English, Marist College
“Transcending ‘Thingness’: Disciplinary Reasoning through Participatory Assessment”

Building on genre, multi-literacies, and communities of practice, this presentation will discuss disciplinarity as something we do rather than something we fulfill. As James Gee puts it, "you cannot ... learn what words in biology mean if you have never 'played' biology (that is, experienced the situations in biology – situations involving action or talk – in which the words apply." Hence, reasoning within a discipline cannot be viewed as something one chooses to do but rather as the creation of a participant. Doing so demands that we help students engage academia's ultimate marker of disciplinary acceptance—grades—because grades most definitively represent whether or not students reason disciplinarily. More precisely, and to draw on Etienne Wenger's notion, grades "reify" genre and disciplinary thinking into "thingness," which she describes as "the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal ... experience." Given the reifying and static nature of grades, as well as their potent authority to decree disciplinarity, educators must determine ways to change grades from something reified into something didactic and dynamic. The presenter will describe ways to involve students in grading processes, thereby not only inviting them to reason as a disciplinary member, e.g. writing a paper as a biologist, but also inviting them to critically reason about what constitutes disciplinary thinking itself. In short, asking students to join in assessing work not only stimulates them to reason within the discipline, it equally sparks them to reason about disciplinarity itself.

Louis Bury, English, CUNY Graduate Center/New York University
“Negotiating Disciplinary Constraints”

Unlike disciplines such as Philosophy or Psychology, where practitioners must choose from one of a small handful of regnant methodologies, English allows for a much greater number of acceptable methodologies. The presenter has used this insight about the permissiveness of English as a discipline as the basis for experimenting with more heterodox critical methodologies than even English normally allows. His dissertation project, titled “Exercises in Criticism: The Theory and Practice of Literary Constraint,” uses constraints to analyze contemporary Anglophone constraint-based writing, resulting, for example, in a chapter comprised entirely of questions, a chapter written while out on a walk, and a chapter that consists of a transcription of a conversation (analyzing a book about conversation). In this way, the dissertation becomes an investigation into the nature of criticism itself: its form, its function, its utility, its ethical imperatives—its limits. This presentation will focus on how a basic
understanding of constraint can provide students with insight into how disciplinary conventions are always in some sense rule-bound and constructed, thus enabling them to adapt more easily to the demands of differing disciplines. The effect on students’ ability to join the free-form explorations they’re taught to do in their first-year composition course with the demands of a more tightly organized, thesis-driven essay will thus be explored.

Rich Murphy, Interdisciplinary Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University
“Focused Inquiry Regarding Empathy and the Absurd: Freshman Discovering the Modern and Postmodern”

Using as lenses popular understandings of the two concepts, empathy and the absurd, and later disciplinary definitions, freshmen investigate the graphic novel Maus and the movie Hotel Rwanda, the novel Flight and the movie Children of Men. Through the year-long course students become aware of the relationships between metaphor and empathy and irony and the absurd. With the new awareness they are introduced to the terms Modern and the Postmodern. Their final reflective piece of writing is to define for themselves what the latter two terms mean. This presentation will focus on attempts to bring to freshmen an understanding of historical and literary/artistic movements, and the glimpses into places that habits of mind and critical thinking can take them.

12:45-1:15 p.m. Luncheon Buffet/ Dining Hall

1:30-2:30 p.m. Keynote Address/ Dining Hall

“Getting into Conversation: Unpacking the Thinking in Discipline-based Courses”

Sally Mitchell, Coordinator Thinking and Writing
Queen Mary University of London

Sally Mitchell coordinates Thinking Writing, a small team at Queen Mary, University of London, that works in partnership with disciplinary colleagues to develop teaching, learning, the curriculum and assessment, through the lens of writing. Started in 2001, Thinking Writing is a prominent player in UK debates around the status of writing at the university, how and where it should be developed, and its role in wider curriculum enhancement. In a 2009 address to the European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing, she argued against developing overly programmatic approaches to writing within institutions, emphasizing instead the importance of working collaboratively at local levels with academic teachers to share intellectual
inquiry and initiative in relation to learning and the curriculum. In her talk for this conference, she plans to take forward some of this thinking, and explore dilemmas and opportunities for building successful collaborative partnerships that she and the team have experienced. She will focus particularly on kinds of dialogue that seem useful in developing writing in the disciplines and on conceptual tools that can help raise awareness of disciplinary thinking.

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Session 3

Beyond Division
2:45p.m. to 4:15p.m.

SESSION 3A: Room 303

“Supporting Critical Thinking in a Vertical Writing Model”

Georgia Rhoades, Sherry Alusow Hart, Elizabeth West, Dennis J. Bohr, Travis Rountree, and Erin Zimmerman; WAC, Appalachian State University

At Appalachian State University, the WAC Program proposed a vertical writing model to the General Education Task Force in 2007, arguing that the goals of critical and creative thinking and effective communication could be met through a dedicated writing experience in each year of a student’s undergraduate education. Part of that new approach to writing required that the second writing course shift from a traditional literature and composition approach to an introduction to WAC, necessitating intense faculty development for the mostly non-tenure track faculty in Composition who would teach the course and had little background in WAC theory and practice. Another shift in curriculum, requiring all programs on campus to offer at least one third-year writing course and a capstone with a writing component in the major, asked WID faculty to connect with faculty in the Composition Program and learn about writing process while sharing their discipline expertise with writing teachers to support the verticality of a student’s undergraduate writing experience. The panelists will offer an overview of our new writing curriculum and the ways in which we have challenged our WAC consultants to engage in a sustainable program by focusing on critical thinking pedagogy. Panel members are also teachers of the new second WAC course and consult with WID faculty, so they will also talk about how they see the vertical model working in its third semester.

SESSION 3B: Room 311

“Graduate Writing Fellows Programs at a State University: From Pilot to Institutionalization”

Michelle Cox, Emily Douglas, Karen Fein, and Barbara Bond
English/WAC, Bridgewater State University
As MA programs have grown at our institution, a four-year plus college of 11,000 students in Massachusetts, so too has the need for more support for graduate student writing. Writing at the graduate level requires knowledge of style, organization, structure, and research methods that differ from the demands of many undergraduate programs. However, at many institutions, support for writing ends once students exit undergraduate programs. In 2008, the Master in Social Work program reached out to WAC to find additional support for their students, especially those students from demographic groups underrepresented in the social work profession. MSW and WAC then partnered with the Office of Teaching and Learning to develop a proposal for a Graduate Writing Fellows (GWF) program. Now in its third year, the GWF program has become a model for other graduate programs on campus. GWF programs currently being piloted in the Master in Criminal Justice and Master in Public Administration programs, and several other programs have expressed interest in piloting such programs next semester. This increased demand has led to institutionalization of the program, with financial and administrative support from the Graduate School. In this presentation, the WAC coordinator and faculty from the MSW program will share outcomes from the MSW GWF program, as well as program documents, logistics, and training practices. As GWF programs are highly contextualized, the WAC coordinator will also share materials she uses for helping graduate programs figure out how they would best design and implement a GWF program that fits the needs of their department and students. The panelists will then open a conversation on this and other types of support for writing at the graduate

PANEL SESSION 3C: Room 316

“Thinking Critically from Composition to Capstone: Analyzing Student Reflections in Their Writing”

Patricia Dyer, Annalisa Castaldo, Mark Graybill, Ilene Lieberman, and Kenneth Pobo; English, Widener University

Students are often convinced that their major courses require completely different thinking skills than their general education courses. However, the presenters have found that when directed to reflect specifically on critical thinking throughout their college career, the students themselves draw parallels and see the connection of the general education curriculum to their majors; written work from both first-year and upper-level classes show that the critical thinking process for general education and discipline-specific classes does not differ materially. The presenters will report on the first two years of a multi-year study on critical thinking, using data from six sections of Honors Composition and four sections of the Values Seminar (an interdisciplinary capstone course), as well as the current phase of the project, launched in the fall semester of 2010, when all students taking Composition 101 will be asked to reflect on their critical thinking processes and to write at the beginning and end of the semester on the topic “Claims, Evidence and Me.” They will also discuss the ways the faculty at Widener University have investigated the language of assignments across disciplines and the shared meanings for question words typically used in assignments, and relate conversations with colleagues across campus (including Chemistry, Hospitality Management, and Nursing) gathered during workshops on Writing in the Disciplines, as well as the integration into their own research of the findings of the College of Arts and Sciences Academic Assessment and General Education Committee report
on critical thinking across the college. Finally, they will show how the inclusion of students in their discussions enriches understanding, for both faculty and students, of the underlying connections among disciplines as well as between disciplines and general education.

**PANEL SESSION 3D: Room 310**

**The Bounded Space: Charting Disciplinary Grammar and the Social Contexts of Language**

Michelle LaFrance and Shawna Shapiro, English, UMASS Dartmouth

“Language Matters: Thinking and Writing Critically about Sociolinguistics”

The presenters will offer rationales, insights, and case studies for developing WAC/WID courses in Sociolinguistics. They will argue that Sociolinguistics is a particularly relevant subfield for critical thinking, reading, and writing, for several reasons: First, it is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing from sociology, anthropology, political science, education, cultural studies, and composition/rhetoric. Second, many of the most prevalent themes in sociolinguistics of English—such as linguistic variation, standardization, discourse analysis, language and identity, etc.—parallel the central concerns of Writing (and/or Communication) Across the Curriculum. As a result, Sociolinguistics courses allow students to see the many links between course content and their own development as thinkers and writers. This greatly enhances the metalinguistic and metacognitive aspects of their learning. Presenters in this panel will each share how they constructed their own iteration of a WAC/WID course in Sociolinguistics, incorporating a variety of genres, topics, and literacy tasks. They will illuminate the possibilities—and a few pitfalls—that they encountered along the way. At the end of the panel, they will lead the audience in two short activities from their classes designed to help students critically think through and develop their ability to analyze common language practices.

Justin Hayes, Adam Katz, and Melissa Kaplan; First Year Writing, Quinnipiac University

“Paralogy as Critical Thinking: First-Year Writing to Writing in the Disciplines”

Since critical thinking is always mediated by language, recent discussions of paralogy in composition studies can be revised to suggest that an error in thinking is thinking governed by an alternative rule of language. This panel will show how a first-year writing course that reframes error as difference enables students to understand thinking as a contextualized use of language, thereby preparing them for the variations to critical thinking that comprise the different language-games of the disciplines. Justin Hayes will present a paper, “Disciplinary Praxis: Signs and Assignments,” and Adam Katz and Melissa Kaplan will conduct a workshop, “Disciplinary Grammar: The Writing Assignment as Machine for Thinking” Together, this group will present, and work through with the audience, a series of assignments that articulate grammar and conceptuality, and they will discuss the means for producing such assignments as might be helpful for any discipline.
The Cooperative Space: Models for Student-Faculty Collaboration

Elizabeth Nesius and Claire Ribeiro, Writing, Passaic County Community College
“Collaborative Strategies to Foster Writing and Thinking in the Disciplines”

A major complaint of faculty is that students struggle to write and think in their chosen majors. Writing Across the Curriculum programs are often created as a solution and have the goal of improving student writing and thinking. However, because these programs are frequently focused in general education courses, their goals may not further faculty goals of helping students improve their skills in the disciplines. The Writing Initiative at Passaic County Community College has developed ways of helping students overcome these limitations through faculty and program collaboration designed to help students begin to write and think critically in their disciplines at the general education course level. Faculty and writing program administrators work together to create assignments and strategies to facilitate this type of learning. Together, they combine expertise in writing and critical thinking with expertise in different disciplines to form strategies for teaching students to apply the general writing and thinking skills they learn in these courses to writing and thinking in their majors. This presentation will demonstrate some of those techniques across the curriculum with specific examples within certain disciplines and look at methods of assessment of the success of these techniques.

Judy Arzt and Kim Richard, Education and English, St. Joseph College
“21st Century Literacies: Web 2.0 in the Disciplines”

John Dewey posed the following definition of reflective thinking: “Active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds which support it and the further conclusions to which it tends.” Dewey also wrote that while “thinking is impossible without language, we must recall that language includes much more than oral and written speech. Gestures, pictures, monuments, visual images, finger movements – anything consciously employed as a sign is, logically, language.” As we strive to prepare our pre-service teachers and in-field teachers to teach in the 21st century, competence in the use of Web 2.0 and multimedia tools is critical. Grounded in Vygotsky’s theory of social constructivism, two presenters who teach in separate college-level, teacher-preparatory courses will explain the use and benefits of the Ning, a web-based online service that allows users to create their own social network. Using the Ning challenged pre-service teachers and in-field teachers to critically think and reflect on course content as well as use of technology as a means of communication. Many students needed to “cross the great divide” as they were challenged to move beyond the traditional paper/pencil model of writing papers for courses to create and respond to blogs that they created on the Ning. Both instructors not only found that participation on the Ning created multiple opportunities for students to develop skills for implementing Web 2.0 tools in their own teaching, but it also built communities of learners through social interactions.
Reading to Discern is Writing to Learn: Annotation, Critical Thinking, and the Role of “Peer Catalysts” in Bridging the Essential Learning Proficiencies”.

QU 101: The Individual in the Community is a first semester seminar required of all first year students at Quinnipiac University, and the first of three general education university seminars focused on questions of an individual’s identity and responsibility across various contexts of community—local, national and global. QU 101 challenges students to locate themselves as individuals who can reflect critically and act diligently in fulfillment of their civic and intellectual responsibilities as engaged members of their new university community. All sixty sections of QU 101 are organized around a set of six common questions, thirty cross-disciplinary readings, and WAC-inspired learning methods to master a number of “Essential Learning Proficiencies”—including Oral Communication, Social Intelligence, Written Communication, and Critical Thinking and Reasoning. The QU 101 “Peer Catalyst” initiative, piloted in fall 2009, features five participating instructors who collaborate with five former QU 101 students. Each Peer Catalyst (PC) participates in the observation and review of student learning experiences to help advance student engagement with the essential learning proficiencies as inter-dependent outcomes. With the program coordinator, three QU 101 peer catalysts will present their findings on the role of annotation in bridging the essential learning proficiencies. The PCs will draw on and synthesize their extensive ethnographic journals on the QU 101 learning experience. The program coordinator will share hand-outs of student work in annotation-driven class discussion and writing to learn methods. The results of an anonymous survey of students’ views of annotation’s effect on their learning proficiencies will cap the presentation.

4:30 p.m.-6:00 p.m.  Cocktail Hour and Closing Reception