

ASSESSMENT NEWS

Department of English, Literature + Reading | Wilbur Wright College

WANTED: Assessment Geeks



Do you daydream about assignment redesign? Are your nightmares filled with the plaintive cries of learners seeking clarity about the purpose of your newest assignment? After a particularly successful or gnarly class session are you compelled to think about the reason it did or did not work? Is one of your secret pleasures thinking about ways to facilitate the process whereby the learners in your classes go beyond the text or required page limit to deep, critical understanding of the significance of works read and written?

If you answered “yes” to one or more of the above questions, **ELR Assessment needs you.** In spring 2015, the Department of English, Literature & Reading Assessment Committee will meet to discuss assignment design, redesign and assessment across the department’s curricula as well as develop a multi-semester plan for systematic assessment. One of the goals of the committee is to articulate connections among that which we teach (content), how we teach it to adult learners (andragogy) and that which learners gain from the aforementioned (learning).

Interested? Please send an email to hdoss@ccc.edu with your day/time availability in spring 2015.

Image: <http://www.warpedfactor.com/p/geeks-wanted.html>

Defining Critical Thinking: ELR Context

This semester, the Department of English, Literature and Reading (ELR) has been undergoing the process of reconceptualizing its exit process for English 101 in order to better reflect its commitment to assessing student learning, critical thinking, critical reflective practice and professional development. This process has revealed a profound commitment to critical thinking as integral to writing (generally) and assessment of student writing in English 101 (specifically). Yet, we have not decided upon a comprehensive definition of critical thinking within the context of English, Literature and Reading.



In spring 2015, we will begin the process of defining critical thinking using the words and phrases (see word cloud above and/or list below) most commonly used by the participants in the survey administered in October 2014. I have placed related terms next to each other, especially if they were used frequently together. Collaboratively, we will decide on the relationship among the words that is most reflective of our collective understanding of critical thinking.

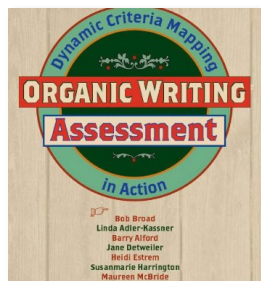
Critical thinking is the ability to or relates to the **effective engagement** with....

- Develop, think, formulate and generate
- College level and reading
- Refine, respond, identify, describe, process and engage
- Assess, evaluate, critique, synthesize and reflect
- Texts, materials, readings, issues and sources
- Arguments, conclusions and claims
- Complex and multiple
- Composition and writing
- Research
- Understand and comprehend
- Thoughtful and engagement
- Society, others’ and perspectives

Note: Words like “from, the, a, an, have, by, be, and, to, of, in, with, this, etc.” as well as a host of pronouns and alternative forms of the words listed below were excluded from the list below.

Reading Corner: Books on Assessment — Composition

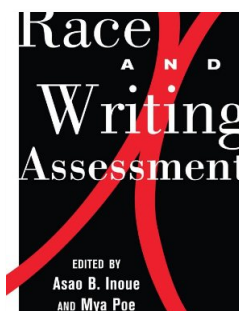
Below are two texts that engage in and continue the conversation about the assessment of student learning within the context of teaching composition. If you review either of these texts, please send me a quick note about its value and limitations.



Organic Writing Assessment: Dynamic Criteria Mapping in Action by Broad, et al. (Utah State UP, 2009).

From Amazon, "...the dynamic criteria mapping experience provide[s] not only an authentic assessment of their own programs, but a nuanced language through which [teachers] can converse in the always vexing, potentially divisive realm of assessment theory and practice."

Race and Writing Assessment (Studies in Composition and Rhetoric) by Inoue and Poe, eds. (Peter Lang, 2012).



From Amazon, "Balancing practical advice and theoretical discussions, *Race and Writing Assessment* provides a variety of models, frameworks, and research methods to consider writing assessment approaches that are sensitive to the linguistic and cultural identities that diverse students bring to writing classrooms."

Note: In spring 2015, I will feature books on Assessment in Literature and Reading. Suggestions? Send them to hdoss@ccc.edu. Thanks!

Rubric (DRAFT) for Assessment of Critical Essay

ELR has been engaged in the process of developing a new tool for the summative assessment of English 101 student writing competencies – a "critical essay" about which more information is forthcoming from the Portfolio Committee. Part of this process has involved the development of a competency-based rubric for determining the degree to which students achieve success relative to the student learning outcomes of English 101. This process has involved two surveys, several meetings and multiple drafts of the document you are now being asked to review and for which feedback is being solicited.

Please review the notes below. Then, review the competency map as a reference tool (page 3). Next, review the competency-based rubric (page 4). Finally, please send any/all feedback on the competency-based rubric by [Sunday, 7 December 2014](mailto:hdoss@ccc.edu) to hdoss@ccc.edu. Or, you may place an annotated copy of the rubric in my box in L323 by the above date.

1.The **first matrix** is an outcomes or competencies map of the CCC English 101 (and 102) SLOs; the IAI English 101 (and 102) SLOs; the existing rubric/list of criteria for success on the English 101 exit essay; and, the most commonly correlated and highest ranking critical thinking skills/metacognitive processes per the second survey. In this matrix, I have privileged the CCC English 101 SLOs because we have adopted them across the district and as a department - it makes sense to measure the other criteria we have used/continue to use against the aforementioned.

2.The **second matrix** is a draft of the rubric we will use to assess the student learning/competency, in the six SLOs, for the critical essay. In this rubric, the six SLOs have become criteria with four levels of competency. Four, rather than three, were chosen to limit the tendency to select the "average" level of competency as well as to encourage a more finely parsed sense of the difference between "good" and "satisfactory" - these tend to be most difficult categories to parse. In the matrix, the language that differentiates the four levels of competency for ease of reading has been **bolded and underlined**.

3.The criteria that are correlated most strongly with critical thinking are shaded in **yellow** on the first and second matrices (page 3-4).

4.The second survey and subsequent discussions have affirmed our collective sense that critical thinking is integral to effective writing and reading at the college-level. Nevertheless, English 101's learning outcomes list critical thinking as a separate criterion or competency. (A) Critical thinking as **an integrated set of skills** is *indirectly assessed* via the "Exposition + Argument" and "Organization + Development" criteria, i.e., a student's ability to demonstrate competence in the aforementioned is an *indirect* indication of her/his ability to think critically (and read analytically). (B) Critical thinking, as metacognitive process that is revealed in a discrete set of specific skills or scholarly practices, is *directly assessed* via the "Critical Thinking" criterion.

5.The "Process" criterion is *indirectly assessed* via a critical student essay, i.e., its overall level of competence in the other five criteria allows the reviewer to *infer* the level of competence with the aspects of the writing process identified in the "Process" criterion.