

## CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH WRITING (CTW)

Informational Session - Agenda

Wednesday September 12, 2007 from 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Lucerne Suite

- I. Welcome and Introductions
  - Mary Finn, Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness
- II. How We Got Here
  - A. SACS, QEP and Critical Thinking through Writing Initiative (CTW)
    - George Rainbolt, Chair - Department of Philosophy, Chair of University Senate Committee on Admissions & Standards, and CTW Coordinator
  - B. CTW & Writing Across the Curriculum: Commonalities and Distinctions
    - George Pullman, Associate Professor - Department of English, Director of Writing Across the Curriculum Center, and CTW Coordinator
- III. The CTW Requirement
  - Oliver Greene, Assistant Professor - School of Music and CTW Coordinator
- IV. Preparation of Faculty for CTW
  - Krista Meinersmann, Clinical Associate Professor, Associate Director of Undergraduate Programs – Byrdine F. Lewis School of Nursing, and CTW Coordinator
- V. Departmental/Majors CTW Plans
  - Bill Bogner, Associate Professor - Department of Managerial Science and CTW Coordinator
- VI. Assessment and Reporting
  - Harry Dangel, Associate Professor, Center for Teaching and Learning and Mary Finn, Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness
- VII. General Education Sub-committee
  - Marti Singer, Associate Professor – Department of English, Director of Lower Division Studies, and Chair of Senate General Education Sub-committee
- VIII. Questions & Answers

CHAIR/DIRECTORS CTW TO DO LIST

Deadline Date

Action

F. Sept. 21, 2007

Send the name of a faculty member to be your CTW Ambassador (one per major) to Mary Finn.  
Send the name of the faculty member to be in charge of assessment of your CTW program to Mary Finn.  
(This person may or may not be the CTW Ambassador.)

F. Dec 14, 2007

Submit your major's proposed CTW plan(s) to General Education Sub-committee using the on-line template at the following url: [www.gsu.edu/ctw](http://www.gsu.edu/ctw)

A CTW plan is required for each undergraduate major. The plan must include:

- a) a list of your CTW courses (including, course number, title and proposed catalog course description );
- b) the plan to train CTW Ambassadors (if the Department is opting out the University-level training offered by the CTW Coordinators; otherwise the department will simply need to indicate its plan to use University-level training);
- c) the plan to assess student learning outcomes in each CTW course;
- d) the plan to report on assessment of student learning

T. Jan. 15, 2008

Submit any CTW required curriculum changes to your college's curriculum process for review. (This may not be required in all colleges.)  
College Deadlines for Spring 08: Arts & Sciences: Feb 8, 2008; RCB: Jan. 15, 2008; CHHS: TBD; College of Education: TBD; AYSPS: April 1, 2008.

W. Oct. 15, 2008

Deadline to submit catalog changes for the 09-10 University Catalog

Fall 08-Spring 09

Prepare instructors to insure that you have enough CTW-trained faculty to cover the CTW courses offered in Fall 09.

Fall 09

Offer enough CTW courses so that your undergraduate students can meet the CTW graduation requirement (The number of sections required will likely start small and then grow.)

## Motion to Add A University-Level Critical Thinking Through Writing Requirement to the Graduation Requirements

Approved by the Committee on Academic Programs and  
Admissions & Standards, March 20, 2007 and by the University Senate, April 19, 2007

Motion:

Effective for students entering Fall 09 and thereafter, all students who seek a baccalaureate degree are required to pass two critical thinking through writing (CTW) courses in their major.<sup>1</sup> Implementation of this motion is contingent upon allocation of necessary resources by FACP.

CTW courses will be proposed by Departments and approved by the General Education (Gen Ed) Subcommittee of the Committee on Academic Programs (CAP). If they wish, colleges/schools may require that proposals be approved at the college level before going forward to the Gen Ed Subcommittee. In their proposal to the Gen Ed Subcommittee, Departments must include a written justification that outlines how each CTW course will use writing to help students achieve Georgia State's learning outcome of improving the discipline-appropriate critical thinking skills of their students.

A CTW course meets the following requirements:

1. It has at least three credit hours.
2. It contains assignments that focus on critical thinking as demonstrated through writing.<sup>2</sup> These assignments together should constitute a substantial percentage of the course grade.
3. It has a maximum of a 25/1 student/instructor ratio. Should a CTW class have more than 25 students, the instructor will receive assistance. If a CTW class enrolls 51-75 students, the assistance of two people would be needed, and so forth.<sup>3</sup>
4. It is taught by a CTW-trained instructor.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this motion, "courses in the major" refers to those courses that students use to fulfill the requirements of Areas G, H, and K of a particular major. All majors must have at least two CTW courses in Areas G, H, or K approved for the 2009-2010 Catalog.

<sup>2</sup> For purposes of this motion, "assignments that focus on critical thinking as demonstrated through writing" are assignments that use writing to help students develop the "wide range of cognitive skills and intellectual dispositions needed to effectively identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments and truth claims; to discover and overcome personal prejudices; to formulate and present convincing reasons in support of conclusions; and to make reasonable, intelligent decisions about what to believe and what to do." (Bassham, Irwin, Nardone & Wallace, *Critical Thinking: A Student's Introduction* (McGraw-Hill, 2005) page 1.) Typically, students will have the opportunity to revise at least one assignment during the semester.

<sup>3</sup> This ratio may be accomplished by various means. Variations include but are not limited to: capping CTW sections at 25 (the ideal), assigning trained CTW graduate student(s) to sections with more than 25 students, and having department or college CTW staff consultant(s) work with sections over 25 students. In some cases, it may be appropriate for the instructors of

CTW courses capped at 25 to have assistance. In these cases, Departments and colleges may petition the Gen Ed Subcommittee and the Provost for additional funding.

<sup>4</sup> CTW training will be available to faculty, graduate students, and staff who are working in CTW courses. Departments must use university-wide CTW training or alternative training approved by the Gen Ed Subcommittee.

Rationale:

The goal of this graduation requirement is to increase GSU students' performance on two of the University's most important general education learning outcomes—critical thinking and written communication. The strategy for achieving this goal is to implement a university-wide two-course CTW graduation requirement. While the specific design of these courses is a departmental matter, each CTW course would present students with engaging assignments and activities based on issues, problems, and applications within the discipline and approach these through multiple writing activities that focus on critical thinking. Each department's implementation of the program will require instituting a two course CTW requirement for graduation, adopting and gaining approval for the necessary curricular revisions, allowing for the training of the faculty members involved, and providing the additional personnel necessary to offer frequent instructional feedback to students.

As evidence of the high priority of this initiative, the University has decided to make CTW its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) as required for accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Georgia State has a fair amount of flexibility when it comes to choosing the focus of our QEP. This motion represents a decision that the focus of our QEP will be on improving the critical thinking skills of our students as exhibited through their writing. Both critical thinking and writing are among Georgia State's general education learning outcomes.

Implementing this new graduation requirement will require resources. In addition to adopting this motion and making the necessary curricular revisions, implementation will require a faculty training program and the additional personnel necessary to offer CTW courses on the 25/1 model. Passing this motion commits Georgia State to provide the necessary resources. Funding for implementation of the QEP will be provided by the Provost Office.

The CTW program will be assessed through the existing assessment process.

## **TRAINING GUIDELINES FOR THE CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH WRITING (CTW) PROGRAM**

*Approved by the Joint CTW Subcommittee of the Committee on Academic Programs and Admissions & Standards, July 2007*

According to the motion approved by the University Senate (5/19/07) establishing a Critical Thinking Through Writing graduation requirement for all undergraduate students: "CTW training will be available to faculty, graduate students, and staff who are working in CTW courses. Departments must use university-wide CTW training or alternative training approved by the Gen Ed Subcommittee."

The present document establishes general guidelines for university-wide CTW training. Departments that wish to opt out of university-wide training must propose, in writing, an alternate CTW training plan and receive approval for the plan from the Gen Ed Subcommittee (a subcommittee of the University Senate's Committee on Academic Programs).

### **a. CTW Ambassadors**

Each department (or, when appropriate, major) will identify one or more faculty member(s) to serve as its CTW Ambassador(s). All Ambassadors will go through University-level CTW training. These Ambassadors will then be responsible for the training of those faculty members within their respective areas who are to teach CTW courses. These Ambassadors also will serve as general liaisons between the CTW program and their departmental faculties. They will provide information and ideas to their departmental faculties about CTW, and they will provide feedback to the University about the practice of CTW within their home departments/majors. Ambassadors will be compensated for their service.

### **b. Ambassador training**

Each year, CTW Ambassadors will be required to attend a training workshop. In this workshop, general concepts of critical thinking through writing will be explored, as well as specific techniques and practices for enhancing student learning and assessing student outcomes with regard to critical thinking through writing. Annual training workshops will be offered in each of approximately three broad disciplinary areas to allow for the efficient sharing of like approaches and practices among Ambassadors. This will also allow training sessions to be limited to 15 or so participants each. All training sessions will cover the basic issues of critical thinking through writing, and attendance at any one of the sessions will satisfy the annual training requirement for CTW Ambassadors.

Training workshops will be coordinated by a team of five faculty members, appointed by the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness in consultation with the deans and chairs. The training team will consist of two faculty members with specific expertise in critical thinking and writing, and three additional faculty members to represent the breadth of disciplines across the university.

### **c. Training of CTW Faculty at the Departmental/Major level**

Each Ambassador will be responsible for coordinating CTW training for those faculty members within

his or her home department/major who will teach CTW courses. While the nature and extent of such training will differ by discipline, each department/major will develop a plan that maps out the general parameters of CTW training for its faculty. This departmental/major plan must be submitted alongside proposals for CTW courses to the Gen Ed Assessment Subcommittee of the University Senate and must be approved by the subcommittee. All faculty members who teach CTW courses within the department/major must undergo training in conformity with the approved departmental/major plan.

## Roles and Responsibilities Related to Critical Thinking through Writing

### Responsibilities of Department Chairs:

- identify department ambassador(s): 1 per major is required
- with input of department &/or ambassador(s), identify courses to be designated CTW
- with input & consultation with ambassador(s), identify instructors teaching CTW courses
- assure that CTW component is identified in all syllabi and assignments are specified
- assure that a person responsible for assessment of CTW is identified
- assure that plan for assessment of CTW-designated courses is developed
- if required, assure that CTW course materials are submitted for approval through Curriculum Approval Process at department & college levels
- assure that CTW-designated courses and department assessment plan is submitted to General Education Sub-committee, University Senate's Committee on Academic Programs
- assure that University Catalog 2009-2010 contains information on CTW courses
- assure that the CTW courses are offered and faculty prepared for full implementation in Fall 2009

### Responsibilities of Ambassadors (minimum of 1 per degree major):

- with input of department &/or chair, identify courses to be designated CTW and assure that CTW component of course is identified in all syllabi and assignments
- if assigned by department chair, submit course materials for CTW approval through the General Education Sub-committee approval process
- with input & consultation with department chair, identify instructors teaching CTW courses
- with input from dept &/or chair, develop prepare faculty for CTW instruction
- with input from dept &/or chair, develop assessment and reporting plan for CTW initiative
- assure that a person responsible for assessment of CTW is identified
- assure that department plan specifies how the CTW component will be assessed and reported
- assure that the course is taught
- assure that assessment of CTW is reported and action plan developed
- provide feedback to the University regarding the practice of CTW in dept/majors
- prepare annual CTW report and submit to General Education Sub-committee
- attend University-level Workshop prepared by CTW coordinators on annual basis

### Responsibilities of CTW-designated Instructors

- receive preparation through department/major's CTW Ambassador
- with input from ambassador, specify CTW component in all syllabi and assignments
- with input from ambassador, specify how CTW component will be assessed and reported
- teach the CTW course
- assess student learning outcomes related to CTW (if assigned)
- provide data on assessment of CTW learning outcomes (if assigned)

### Responsibilities of CTW Coordinators

- Develop content of University-level workshops for training CTW Ambassadors
  - CTW Workshop Dates:
    - M. Sept. 24, 2007 from 1:00-4:00 p.m.
    - T. Oct. 2 from 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
    - F. Oct. 12 from 9:00-12:00 p.m.
  - CTW Workshop Deliverables: Examples of CTW assignments, rubrics for grading and assessment of student learning, content of syllabi, discussion of curriculum revisions and assessment plans
- Provide assistance to CTW Ambassadors

Contact Information for CTW – QEP

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## Critical Thinking through Writing (CTW) Assessment Issues

### Scholarly Community as the Context for of CTW courses:

At its core, the assessment of student learning in CTW courses is anchored in the scholarly communities of our university, our discipline and department, our course, and our class. At the University level, our shared definition is that critical thinking is “**a wide range of cognitive skills and intellectual dispositions needed to effectively identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments and truth claims; to discover and overcome personal prejudices; to formulate and present convincing reasons in support of conclusions; and to make reasonable, intelligent decisions about what to believe and what to do.**” (Bassham, G., Irwin, W, Nardone, H., & Wallace, J., 2005. *Critical Thinking: A Student's Introduction*. New York: McGraw-Hill, page 1.).

Our scholarly disciplines define for us the content which is used for critical thinking, the genre of critical thinking that is applied, and nature of the outcomes that are produced, e.g., scientific method, argumentation, thesis-driven research paper, a problem-solving analysis, reflective practice evaluation, etc. In each example, elements of the University's adopted definition would be employed, although with varying emphasis and application.

We develop, with our colleagues, a shared vision for what students should learn in our program and individual courses. From these multiple contexts we address the following assessment questions:

- **Can our students demonstrate the kind of critical thinking and writing skills expected by our disciplines?**
  - What are the manifestations of critical thinking in my discipline?
  - What are the writing tasks that would demonstrate critical thinking?
  - Do my colleagues agree on what student work represents acceptable critical thinking and acceptable writing?
  - Can we communicate our expectations to our students?
- **Are CTW courses improving the level of critical thinking and writing skills?**
- **What is the evidence that programs are using the assessment results to improve student learning?**