

Rewriting Across the Curriculum: Writing Fellows as Agents of Change in WAC Theories of Specialized Discourses and Writing Fellows Programs

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Abstract: How much do specialized academic discourse communities matter to undergraduate writers? To what degree should theories of specialized discourses influence the design of undergraduate Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs? At the University of Iowa, where an undergraduate Writing Fellows program engages peer tutors in writing-intensive courses across the curriculum, we have considered those questions from various angles, hoping to learn how our program can best meet the needs of our undergraduate writers and their instructors.

In our search for answers, we talked with Writing Fellows about their experiences with assignments from inside and outside their own major fields, we reviewed the courses and assignments they worked with during the first four years of our program, and surveyed instructors of those courses about the educational functions they wanted their writing assignments to serve. Our findings suggest that at our university, there may be more similarities than disciplinary differences in the undergraduate writing assignments instructors give, and in the genres students are expected to produce in classes throughout the curriculum. The general academic skills of open-minded inquiry, critical analysis, and use of sources to support an argument figured more prominently in teachers' instructional goals than did specialized discourse skills required for writing as scholars in particular academic disciplines. Similarly, most of our Writing Fellows themselves, after exposure to debates about general and specialized discourses and tutors, preferred the generalist over the specialist position in their work as Writing Fellows.

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When we situate our findings within ongoing debates among composition scholars about the relative virtues and vices of generalist and specialist WAC instruction, we find that arguments for and against disciplinarily specialized writing instruction are complicated by such concepts as "meta-genres" and "transdisciplines," and by fine distinctions among such WAC outgrowths as WID (Writing in the Disciplines), WAD (Writing Across the Disciplines), LAC (Language Across the Curriculum), CAC (Communication Across the Curriculum), and ECAC (Electronic Communication Across the Curriculum). The conversation is further complicated by its intersection with much larger academic debates about the purposes of general education and the values of the liberal arts tradition. To see how our Writing Fellows program contributes to these far-reaching conversations, our local research examines the words and practices of program participants, keeping in mind that ours is an exclusively undergraduate positioning of WAC pedagogy.

Theoretical Debates about Specialized Discourses: WAC, Composition, and English Studies

Writing-across-the-Curriculum programs were born of a desire to serve undergraduates as would-be academic writers—academic initiates whose education should guide them to full-fledged membership in whatever specialized branches of the academy they chose as major fields of study. Michael Pemberton (1995) describes this social-constructionist WAC model, inspired by discourse scholars Richard Rorty, Stanley Fish and Clifford Geertz, as "the paradigm of polyvocalism." Proponents of this model tend to view the curriculum in terms of diverse and specialized conversations in the "'content area' disciplines," and to question the value of "general-purpose 'academic discourse'" (p. 116), featured by most undergraduate composition courses since their first appearance at Harvard in 1874. This model presumes that WAC student writers are mystified by a lack of transfer between general academic writing skills introduced in first-year composition and specialized ways of knowing and writing in the various disciplines they subsequently encounter as they venture further afield, across the curriculum. WAC courses may be offered either as a corrective, to replace "general" first-year composition courses, or as a supplement, to guide students' writing skills from their generalist beginnings into the narrower pathways of disciplinary specialization. Pemberton (1995) argues that the English-departmental origin of most WAC programs tends to inflect WAC pedagogy with English Studies' particular ways of privileging text and language. English Studies is a discipline that values written language—not just as a medium for communicating knowledge, but as the essence of knowledge itself. Evidence of this bias, according to Christopher Thaiss (2001), can be found in the epigrammatic phrase "Writing to Learn" in Composition-sponsored WAC workshops (p. 302).

The text-bias of English Studies can also be seen in David Bartholomae's (1985) developmental-process model of writing called "inventing the university." Writing from the field of English Composition, Bartholomae describes writing as a performance that goes beyond the mere act of writing words on a page, to encompass modes of thinking: "The student has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community" (p.134). At the core of this language-powered learning process, according to Bartholomae, is the rational self, schooled in the ways of critical thinking. The successful student writer learns to adopt an authoritative, skeptical stance, ever questioning conventional wisdom and rejecting or complicating "naïve assumptions." Adopting the critical stance of the academic generalist is only a starting point for student writers, however. Bartholomae writes that after this general academic initiation, students

discover how the inventive process of academic discourse diverges into "a variety of voices and interpretive schemes." Undergraduate education, Bartholomae assumes, is initially governed by a classical, liberal arts pedagogy that encourages students to sample rather than specialize in various disciplinary identities. But as students grow as thinkers and writers, they learn to textualize themselves in differently specialized ways—"to write, for example, as a literary critic one day and as an experimental psychologist the next; to work within fields where the rules governing the presentation of examples or the development of an argument are both distinct and, even to a professional, mysterious" (pp. 134-135).

Demystifying the textual practices of specialized academic disciplines has long been a prime pedagogical objective of WAC programs. In an often-cited CCCarticle, Elaine Maimon (1979) described students who venture into specialized fields of knowledge as "strangers in a foreign culture." Defining the students' disciplinary estrangement as a pedagogical "problem," according to Christopher Thaiss (2001), has produced the rationale that WID (Writing in the Disciplines) is a justification for WAC: "[T]he notion that each discipline has its own distinctive epistemology and discourse has been a central argument in support of a cross-curricular writing movement. Without the "in" there is little argument for the "across" (p. 313).

Some critics of WAC, however, argue that such a view overlooks important discursive continuities across disciplines. Writing in the *Associated Departments of English Bulletin*, Jane Hedley and JoEllen Parker (1991) criticize the WAC tendency to exaggerate the autonomy and incommensurability of the disciplines. Disciplines themselves are constantly in flux, they point out, and disciplinary boundaries defy definition. Moreover, presenting disciplines to students as exclusive discourse communities is problematic, because it positions them as academic outsiders who are ill equipped to make contributions to any field. At the same time, exaggerating the importance of disciplinary boundaries discourages students from engaging in creative, cross-disciplinary ways of thinking. Hedley and Parker, who teach at a private liberal arts college (Bryn Mawr), favor the notion of "inquiry-based" education that typifies the liberal arts curriculum. This form of instruction emphasizes general humanity over particular disciplinarity by posing questions about human problems, fostering awareness of one's self and the world, and cultivating "a capacity for deliberate living" (p. 7). The belief that students must be socialized into distinct disciplinary communities, according to Hedley and Parker, is misplaced in undergraduate education because it reflects the particular values of the research university, with its graduate programs and professional schools where disciplines and departments seem more intact and separate than at undergraduate liberal arts colleges. While inventing the university may mean positioning general education as a foundation for developing specialized knowledge, inventing the liberal arts college reverses the process, putting specialized knowledge to work in the service of general education. As Hedley and Parker explain,

[W]e should meet [students] where they already are and enlist the specialized knowledge of the disciplines to formulate questions of a more general interest and importance to them in their adult lives: "What is the best possible form of the state? How does a child come to think and behave as an adult? What are the primary constituents of the physical world? What good is a poem?" (p.7)

Like Hedley and Parker, WAC scholars have also suggested that discursive continuities across disciplines are being overlooked and have accordingly raised questions about the disciplinary view of student identity and student writing instruction. Art Young and Donna LeCourt (2000), in an online WAC forum, "Principles that should guide WAC/CAC program development in the coming decade," argue that emphasizing discourse differences over commonalities may result in students learning to write as sociologists or literary critics, but to the detriment of their writing to learn about sociological or literary content and ideas, or even writing to learn about themselves and their relationship to the world. In the liberal arts tradition, the latter practice of Writing to Learn may result in better citizens and human beings rather than merely better professionals. WAC, they say, needs to balance Learning to Write (like a sociologist etc.) with Writing to Learn, for example, to learn the socioeconomic effects, of race, class and gender, by writing about them.

Likewise, Michael Carter's (2007) study of outcomes assessment plans across the curriculum at his own large research institution finds that pedagogical goals of writing instruction cut across departments and disciplines. In reviewing the intended outcomes plans from a broad array of departments, Carter notes the appearance of cross-disciplinary "meta-genres," such as the review, the empirical study, and the source-based paper. Drawing from the social-action theory of Carolyn Miller, David Russell, and Charles Bazerman, Carter examines how such meta-genres "responses to academic learning situations" (p. 394) describe intellectual actions that connect ways of thinking and writing across disciplines. From the four meta-genres that emerge from his study (problem-solving, empirical inquiry, research from sources, and performance), Carter derives four "meta-disciplines" that divide the curriculum, not by disciplinary content knowledge or textual genres, but by characteristic ways of doing the work of the academy. A similar vision of the academic curriculum informs many general education programs that prescribe a distribution of preliminary undergraduate courses across broad categories such as social sciences, natural sciences, arts and humanities.

A popular strategy for resolving the conflict between specialist and generalist writing pedagogies is to attempt to forge collaborative, cross-disciplinary partnerships between composition instructors and instructors of discipline-specific courses. Elizabeth Wardle (2004) asks whether such alliances can help composition courses achieve the common goal, identified in the WPA Outcomes Statement, of "preparing students for the writing they will do within the academy" (p.1). In her study of one such initiative at a large, public Midwestern university, she concludes that several factors are apt to inhibit the accomplishment of this goal: 1) the discipline-specific motives of the program may be undermined by the unofficial motives of composition teachers trained in departments of English; 2) in keeping with their unofficial motives, composition teachers often replace disciplinary genres, the official objects of instruction, with disciplinary topics; and 3) composition instructors tend to regard the dominant genres of their own discipline, English Studies, as "genres-in-general."

Such impediments to the teaching and learning of specialized discourse conventions in composition-based WAC courses reflect the liberal arts values behind the disciplined and departmentalized field of English Studies, regardless of whether it is situated in an undergraduate liberal arts college or a large research university. Like Hedley and Parker, many of the English-trained first-year composition instructors in Wardle's (2004) interviews rejected or simply disregarded the official program objective of familiarizing students in learning-community-linked, first-year-composition courses with the discipline-specific conventions of their chosen fields. In place of the official specialized discourse objectives of the program, these instructors substituted goals aligned with their own personally held educational values—goals that resembled Bartholomae's (1985) notion of helping students develop a skeptical academic stance and Hedley and Parker's (1991) emphasis on cultivating the self-awareness required for deliberate living and responsible citizenship. The development of "critical thinking" or "critical consciousness" as well as "preparation for citizenship in the U.S." (p. 2) dominated the pedagogical objectives described by the teachers in Wardle's study.

Guided by the desire to cultivate students' critical consciousness, these same composition teachers often asked students to contemplate and critique *issues* from their chosen disciplines rather than to "try on" the disciplines' conventional ways of knowing or to practice using their specialized language and textual genres. For example, an instructor of first-year students in an agricultural business learning community assigned Orwell's *Animal Farm* and asked students to use knowledge gained in their economics class to critically assess the novel and, in turn, to use the novel to aid them in critiquing economic theories. This example realizes Hedley and Parker's (1991) injunction to "enlist the specialized knowledge of our disciplines to formulate questions of more general interest and importance to [students] in their adult lives" (p. 7). And, indeed, Wardle (2004) reports that although students did not feel their cross-disciplinary composition courses were preparing them for writing in their majors, "students and teachers alike appeared to enjoy

pursuing the unofficial motive—reading interesting major-related texts, thinking about them, and writing about them in the form of English essays" (p. 11).

Wardle's (2004) study reveals that the genres students actually practiced writing in their learning-community composition classes were those most familiar to their composition instructors, all of whom were either graduate students or part-time instructors in the Department of English. Wardle reports that these instructors appeared to be so thoroughly interpolated by the ideology of their discipline that they did not even recognize their writing assignments as discipline-specific. Among the assignments Wardle mentions are "personal essays about what it means to be educated" (p. 13) and critical analyses of texts that construct and convey the content of the learning communities' focal disciplines.

In sum, despite the explicit goals of the WAC program in which they taught, the cross-disciplinary composition teachers at the large public university where Wardle (2004) conducted her study understood academic writing in the disciplinary light of English Studies, a field that Michael Carter (1992) has described as directly descended from the classical, liberal arts origins of the Academy. English Studies specialists, according to Carter, are "heirs to the Sophists" (p. 311), the itinerant, generalist scholars of ancient Athens who "taught just about everything in the arts and sciences" (p. 304) and specialized in the art of rhetoric, particularly epideictic rhetoric, or the rhetoric of display. The function of this inherited genre, Carter maintains, is largely ritualistic. In the hands of English Studies scholars it signifies and solidifies communal identity, and within the community it serves as the medium for developing and asserting academic insider status. Writing to an audience of English Studies "insiders," Carter maintains that scholarly discourse (such as his own performance in "Scholarship as the Rhetoric of Display") and graduate teaching at research universities is directed "inward" to other specialists in the community. Undergraduate teaching in English Studies has a far more important public function, however. To Carter, the pedagogical objective of undergraduate English Studies instruction resembles the cultivation of skepticism that Bartholomae (1985) and Hedley and Parker (1991) regard as the essential mission of liberal arts education:

As scholars and heirs to the Sophists, our job is to ask questions, to make knowledge problematic; the questions we ask are far more important than the answers we offer, which are ever tentative. As teachers and likewise heirs to the Sophists, our job is to teach others to ask questions, to make accepted norms and practices problematic, to read and write their worlds with a healthy skepticism (p. 311).

In the pages that follow, we share some of our own insights into WAC endeavors by examining the generalist/specialist conflict as it emerges in our own cross-curricular, undergraduate Writing Fellows program. Like Carter (1992) and Wardle (2004), we are positioned in a large public research university, but we are further situated in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, which is governed separately from the Graduate College. The mission statement of the College, published on the University website, includes goals that resonate with those of both specialist and generalist WAC models, including the goals of preparing students to function as "knowledgeable citizens of the 21st century" who will work to build a "culturally diverse, humane, technically advanced, and globally conscious environment" (<http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/college/ms.shtml>). Within this institutional context, our study suggests that in addition to David Russell's (2001) admonition that writing instruction must be informed by an understanding of "how social practices such as professions and disciplines intersect with schooling at various points in students' development as writers" (p. 262), it is important to understand how these practices intersect with various stages of writers' development as students.

Practical Debates about Specialized Discourses and Tutors: Writing Fellows

The Generalist Origins of Writing Fellows Programs

One could argue that the very origin of Writing Fellows Programs, like the creation of Writing Centers (Pemberton, 1995), complicates WAC notions of specialized discourses because the first programs recommended that Fellows be assigned to courses outside their own disciplines, thus preventing them from taking advantage of their own disciplinary content and genre knowledge and encouraging them to read and critique as generalists. The argument that the creation of generalist Writing Fellows Programs challenges WAC notions of specialized discourses can be thought of as somewhat ironic, as many Writing Fellows Programs, for example, Margot Soven's at LaSalle, were outgrowths of WAC programs (2001; 2006).

The developer of the first fully described Fellows initiative, Tori Haring-Smith (1992), whose program at Brown University, like ours at Iowa (Severino & Knight, 2007) evolved from a writing center rather than a WAC faculty development program, believed that Fellows should be assigned to courses outside their major except for foreign language courses and courses "relying on a heavily technical vocabulary" (p. 179). Haring-Smith believed it was better for Fellows not to have either content-expertise (or presumably genre-expertise) and to respond to writers as educated lay readers, pointing out places where they were confused in the progression of ideas as they read the draft (p. 179). Her argument was that a tutor with content and genre expertise could be prone to "correct" the content and genre, paying more attention to product than process. Also, because Fellows are specially chosen and trained, they would be able to recognize and adapt to any unusual genre or discourse differences they encountered. As Soven (2001) notes, "Assigning peer tutors to courses outside their majors became an important part of the Brown credo" (p. 209).

Soven's (2001) research found that in the 1980s, programs across the country that modeled themselves on Brown's program assigned tutors to courses outside their major, but gradually in the 1990s became more flexible for various reasons. First, directors realized that for first-time tutors, an assignment to a familiar course was confidence-building. Second, writing center research such as Kiedaish and Dinitz's (1993) study of tutors helping with papers in and outside their fields showed that the tutors who were not literature majors did not know what questions to ask writers to improve drafts of literature papers. Unlike the English major tutors, the non-majors seemed not to know exactly what the genre of literary analysis was, how to elicit it from the writer, and how to organize the results of their elicitations. However, although the tutoring sessions with non-majors, which did not significantly improve the draft, were rated low by literature instructors, they were still evaluated as helpful interactions by the student participants. Wary about the lack of productivity in these sessions, Kiedaish and Dinitz tentatively conclude that the process of collaboration may possibly be an end in itself and does not always have to result immediately in better written products.

Do Fellows See Themselves as Generalists or Specialists?

How do Fellows see themselves in relation to the disciplines of their majors and of the courses they fellow? After their fellowing experience, do they still adhere to the original generalist conception of the Writing Fellows program, the conception introduced to them when they were hired—that any Fellow can and should be assigned to any course, preferably outside of his/her discipline? Or do they subscribe to theories of specialized discourses to the point that they believe that majors make the best Fellows for a course?

Like our previous three Writing Theory and Practice classes, our most recent 2007 class of Fellows discussed, read, and engaged in the generalist/specialist debate as a sequence of activities and assignments. Their first exposure to the debate occurred when two members of the experienced Fellows group, who met once a month with the class of new Fellows, presented the debate to them and related their own work as Fellows in relation to the issues. (Experienced Fellows develop the agenda for these meetings and had

selected the generalist/specialist debate as the topic for the day. With their consent, we use the Fellows' real first names.) Suzanne, one of the two experienced Fellow discussion leaders and a psychology and music double-major, had twice fellowed an interdisciplinary music history course, *World of the Beatles*, but the two other semesters had been assigned to *Classics and Anthropology*. As her music major was in French horn performance, she initially knew little about the Beatles, but the second time she fellowed the course, she was more knowledgeable, informed not by her major, but by student papers on the Beatles and by the instructor and her first set of students. Jenna, the other experienced Fellow, a cinema major in her sixth semester of fellowing, had never been assigned to a cinema course (We have fellowed only one). Instead, she had worked in the Beatles course, Victorian literature, leisure studies, art history, and political science. Both experienced Fellows tended to favor the generalist position. However, Brett, an experienced Fellow political science major who in his four fellowing semesters had been assigned only to political science courses, as was his strong preference, countered their position, defending his status as the most helpful for students and himself. Although the particular political science course topics might be unfamiliar to him, he said, the format and style of a political science paper is familiar, increasing, he believed, his confidence, authority, and therefore his helpfulness to students. Brett's position, like that of Bartholomae (1985) and Maimon (1979) is influenced by theories of specialized discourses.

The last assignment in the generalist/specialist sequence at the end of the semester and correspondingly, at the end of their first fellowing experience was to read the debate between generalist Susan Hubbuch (1988) and Kiedaish and Dinitz (1993), and addressing their arguments, to write about whether their position on the controversy had changed over the course of the semester as a result of reading, discussion, and fellowing. Fellows were to write about which position they had finally arrived at and why. We made copies of these writings and analyzed and classified the new Fellows' reasons for and against each position.

Of the 17 new Fellows, 13 assumed the generalist position, although two did not take that position strongly. Of those 13 generalists, all but two, a history major and an English major, were assigned to fellow courses outside their majors. The four who took the specialist position were two history majors, a political science major, and a music major who happened to be assigned respectively to history, political science, and music courses. Two of those four did not take a strong specialist position. Hence, for these first-time Fellows, the courses they were assigned to, either in or outside their major, influenced the positions they took. Since they were only first-semester Fellows, they had no other course experience to compare with their present experience.

Those who favored the generalist position did so for a number of reasons, some of which relate to tutoring dynamics and others which, more pertinent to the issues here, directly challenge theories of specialized discourses. Natalie, an English major assigned to an English course, used Hubbuch (1988) to argue that specialized knowledge of a discipline would not be necessary if the Fellows realize "that the universe of discourse has a varied and diverse terrain (p. 24)" and if they communicate well with the course professor about his or her expectations. She claimed that all discourses "can be collected under the umbrella of academic discourse. In this way, all types of writing assignments must meet the same basic demands; that is, they must be 'self-contained,' include the writer's 'immediate premises,' explain the 'significance of the work,' and must draw 'connections...among ideas' (Hubbach, 1988 p. 27)." For Ginny, who titled her paper "Generally a Generalist," the generalist tutor can establish the best balance of power with the writer:

...I have found that my ability to relate to the students I work with relies heavily on my ability to show my own weaknesses. Students are less hostile towards me as a person and more receptive to my ideas for their writing when I intersperse my comments with "I don't know—what do you think?" Because I am clearly not an expert in the subject I am tutoring, the writing conferences I hold with my students are collaborative—true peer to peer conversations. My uneasiness about the subject matter my students are working with keeps me humble and furthermore, maintains an excellent balance of power; the student gets to be an expert in the

class and material we are working with, while I can assume the role of an expert in basic writing techniques."

With the balance of power Ginny describes, she and her students act as co-inquirers in the Hedley and Parker (1991) vein, exploring the best ways to present the writer's ideas about this course material.

Alex, majoring in international studies, an already interdisciplinary area, said that every paper he has had to write in any discipline in Iowa's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences has been an argument supported with textual evidence. Even though he had never taken an anthropology course, the assignments in the anthropology course he followed were familiar argumentative tasks. Alex's observations corroborate the results of our two surveys reported below: a survey of assignments we have followed and a survey of professors we have worked with in the program.

The four specialist-oriented students assigned to courses in their majors had various reasons for their stances. One reason was insecurity about following a course outside their major their first semester. Said one fellow rather dramatically,

The mental hit I would take by stumbling around in a conference not knowing what to say or being corrected on what's considered acceptable writing in their particular field would be great and I would probably have to seriously reconsider my value as a tutor and my worth as a person.

Megan, the political science major, agreed wholeheartedly with Kiedaisch and Dinitz (1993) that because of her major she knew what questions to ask her students about political decision-making models in the course she followed. Unlike Brett who felt more useful because of his political science genre knowledge, Megan felt more useful because of her content knowledge: "Although I didn't have a thorough understanding of each of the models, I did have a good understanding of the political actors the models applied to, and I think this was especially useful." She said that had she not had this information, she might have asked students to include it in their papers, thus advising them to write for an uninformed rather than an informed audience, which is not appropriate for students writing for many upper-level courses. Megan noted, "Their job is to adequately respond to an assignment and the expectations of their professor, not to educate their tutor." Molly, one of the two specialist-oriented history majors, was assigned to a history colloquium, a course in which students learn how to write as historians. She thought it particularly fitting and helpful to students that she had already taken a history colloquium. Thus, she had written a colloquium paper, knew what colloquium professors were looking for, and armed with this course- and discipline-specific discourse knowledge, she could answer students' questions with confidence. Claire, the other history major, assigned to a history general education course, also felt empowered by her discourse knowledge: "[F]or my first round, I really appreciated the fact that I was an 'expert' in conventions of history writing." She pointed out that generalists as well as specialists could impose their opinions about topics and ways of writing. "Just because someone isn't an expert on a topic does not mean that they are less likely to let their own interests affect the advice they give students."

Although the minority position upholding the benefits of specialized discourses and tutors had solid arguments, the majority of Fellows (13 of 17) chose the generalist position based on arguments for the balance of tutor-writer power and for discourse similarities across the disciplines.

Writing Assignments Across the Curriculum: Genre Differences or Similarities?

Another way our Writing Fellows Program challenges and complicates theories of specialized discourses is that in our College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, our followed assignments across the disciplines have resembled one another in many ways. Like the assignments in Soven's (2006) core courses and Wardle's (2004) WAC program, they seem to share characteristics of general "academic discourse." When we started

our Fellows program, we anticipated that our main focus would be helping students write in different disciplinary genres and styles. We expected that, following Bartholomae (1985), our task as program directors would be helping Writing Fellows help their students write like historians, anthropologists, political scientists and literary critics, precisely so they wouldn't have the burden of having to "invent the university." We hoped to learn disciplinary secrets by observing differences in assignments across the disciplines and different genres and styles of student writing in response to them. Instead, we saw surprising similarities among assignments that came from multiple departments in the College. Like the assignments of Hedley and Parker (1991) and Wardle (2004), most of them called for similar tasks and skills: textual analysis, textual synthesis, textual comparisons, application of course concepts to real-world situations, or a personalizing of course knowledge (Davis & Shadle, 2000) that demonstrated empathy with the real or fictional groups of individuals studied in the course.

"Personalizing assignments" ask students to put themselves in the positions of people in particular situations that the course addresses. For example, 1) An ill person seeking a cure in an ancient time—from the History of Medicine; 2) A Peace Corps volunteer needing to identify a key problem in his/her community and key groups to work with to solve it, in order to guide the next volunteer—from Latin American Economy and Society; 3) A designer of social programs for women—from an anthropology course, Motherhood and Reproduction. 4) A creator of a "utopian vision for our country" from Perspectives on Leisure and Play.

The History of Medicine assignment, from this already interdisciplinary course, requires students to adopt the techniques of fiction-writing: remaining in historical persona while still using and citing sources as a student. In fact, the professor acknowledges (underlined by the authors) that students are actually writing fiction:

Assuming that you are a literate person at some point in the centuries we have covered, write a letter describing your experience with an illness and your encounters with both secular [philosophical] and religious healers. To do this, you need to choose a **specific point in time** and using Porter, lectures and other readings, understand what options are available to you at that historical point. You must not go to see Galen for medical advice, for instance, if you decide to be a person living at the time of Hippocrates. No further research is required, but you must be accurate given the information that is available to you in the course materials. Reference to primary source documents from "your" time (or before) is a good idea. While you, as a real letter writer, would not provide notes for source citations, you do need to have them in this fictional letter.

Note that the resulting genre is a *letter* (no audience is specified, so we understand that the student chooses her own audience), certainly not a genre specific to history writing, as would be a narrative synthesized from primary source documents. Fiction writing, a province of English Studies, is usually required only in creative writing rather than literature classes, which teach students to critique but not write fiction. Those History of Medicine students who are reluctant to adopt a fictional persona and prefer a scholarly one can choose the more traditional alternative prompt:

Craft an essay explaining why Western medicine by 1500 had strong roots in both classical Greco-Roman philosophical medicine and the Judeo-Christian religious tradition. Support all points with evidence drawn from the course materials. Cite your sources of information and quotations.

According to the Fellows who worked with this assignment, two majors in history and one in anthropology, colorful accounts of being bled with leeches or having their humours balanced were far more interesting to comment and conference on than the more traditional historical roots essay, although some students had

difficulty staying within the historical period, anachronistically referring in their letters to phones, airplanes, and TVs.

Many of the assignments we have followed across campus have been disciplinarily ambiguous. At an education conference, we put up on an overhead four of the assignments we followed in our first year, but without telling the audience the discipline: 1) A history assignment about Japanese internment requiring comparative character analysis in two books, one of them fiction; 2) An anthropology assignment requiring analysis of the colonial relationships in the movie, *The Quiet American*; 3) A classics assignment again demanding empathic fictionalizing, asking the student to write as an ancient Greek about his/her favorite festival, using arguments from the course texts; 4) An American Studies assignment requiring an analysis of the student's walk in the woods and relating it to one's own and Thoreau's and Raymond Williams' relationships with nature. When we asked the conference audience to guess the disciplines of the assignments, no one came up with a single correct answer. Because the assignments required analysis and argument about or from texts and a film, they didn't distinguish themselves from one another and could easily have been English Studies assignments, even though their authors were professors of history, anthropology, classics, and American Studies (Severino & Trachsel, 2004), not composition teachers as in Wardle's 2004 study.

Because of the similarity in assignments (except for "outlier" assignments in Geoscience where students were actually writing science by doing lab reports), rather than helping our Fellows cross disciplines, we had to help them cross pedagogies. Instructors had widely different ideas about whether and how the Fellows should comment on their students' global and local problems, and how directive they should be about them, and their differences were completely unrelated to their disciplines. For example, some professors were satisfied that Fellows mainly responded to global issues such as the paper's argument and organization, but others wanted Fellows to comment more on expression, grammar, and punctuation. These contrasting global-local emphases were unrelated to the professors' disciplines. One English instructor wanted her Fellows to be in complete agreement with her about the types of revisions necessary in her students' work. To another English instructor, it didn't matter if her assessment of a student's draft differed from that of the Fellow. It was up to the student writer to resolve the conflict and select the most appropriate comments to respond to in his or her revision. This pedagogical difference between English instructors was obviously not related to discipline since both instructors had been trained in English studies (Severino & Trachsel, 2004).

Instructors' Goals in Assigning Writing: Disciplinary, Critical, and/or Attitudinal?

Similar assignment tasks and genres across disciplines and the lack of discipline-specific genres except for the Geoscience lab report led us to wonder to what extent the instructors who authored assignments like these subscribed to theories of specialized discourses and to what extent they saw themselves as teaching disciplinary discourses and genres to their students. We designed a short survey asking instructors we have worked with in the Writing Fellows Program what their goals are when they assign writing. When they construct their assignments, are their goals primarily disciplinary, critical/analytical, and/or attitudinal? To the 34 instructors who have worked with us, we sent out by e-mail a short questionnaire (see Appendix A). The survey had three short-answer questions, each emphasizing one of the goals, which are not mutually exclusive. That is, a respondent could embrace all three goals as equally important and rate each as a 4. They were to rate each goal on a scale from 1 (Not a Goal) to 4 (Very Important Goal). The survey also featured an extended-answer question about whether working with Writing Fellows had influenced their responses to those three short-answer questions about assignment goals, and an invitation to comment in writing on their assignment goals.

We received 25 of the 34 surveys, for a 74% return rate. Fourteen were from instructors in the Humanities, 8 were from the Social Sciences, and 3 were from Natural Sciences. All 25 instructors said that general analytical and critical abilities were a Very Important Goal and unanimously marked 4 for question 2. Like Bartholomae (1985), these faculty see developing a healthy skepticism as a key trait of the academic discourse they desire from their students.

Confirming our experience of finding similar writing assignments across the disciplines, especially assignments that asked students to assume different personae and thus identify with people from an era or in a particular social situation, Attitude Examination emerged as a more important goal than Disciplinary Socialization with a mean score of 2.8 as opposed to 2.4, thus further problematizing notions of specialized discourses in WAC and Composition. Four instructors, two from the Social Sciences and two from the Humanities, marked that disciplinary socialization was for them Not a Goal. On the other hand, all three science professors marked disciplinary socialization as Very Important.

Some of the instructors' responses to the free-response questions 4 and 5 revealed why they didn't mark "disciplinary goals" with a higher score. However, none of their reasons had to do with the experience of working in the Writing Fellows, which according to these instructors, had not changed their goals for assigning writing. Two stated that disciplinary socialization was more important for graduate students and majors as opposed to general education students, similar to Hedley and Parker's (1991) argument. It should be noted, though, that many of the courses we Fellow are not general education courses but are courses that serve mostly majors; Fellows work only in small courses of 15 to 45 students, and many General Education Requirements are large lecture courses with hundreds of students and TA-led discussion groups. One literature instructor, obviously unfamiliar with WAC terminology of specialized discourse theories, said she was confused and taken aback by the word "socialization," seeing it as a threat to her students' individuality and unique writing styles. She explained that although she gives students models of what she called "intelligent discourse," she encourages her students to develop their own voices in writing. Another literature instructor also implied that socialization was associated with models and writing products, whereas he was more interested in writing and thinking processes: "My thoughts about the role of writing assignments are constantly evolving. I view them less and less as calling for the production of a model of writing and more as analytical exercises designed to sharpen my students' appreciation and understanding of the material." These instructors would identify with the liberal arts, general-education, English Studies-based camp of Hedley and Parker and of Wardle's (2004) composition teachers, rather than the specialized disciplinary-discourse-community camp. The Political Science professor who ranked Disciplinary Socialization as Not a Goal and Attitude Examination as a Very Important Goal ironically explained that he didn't think that professional writing in Political Science was of good enough quality such that "approximating it" was a desirable activity for undergraduate students.

Some of the responses to Questions 4 and 5, however, did highlight disciplinary differences. The art historian and the geoscientist said working with Fellows made them realize how different their respective discourses are from other discourses to which their students are exposed at the university. Thus, at least for some instructors, our Writing Fellows program is fulfilling the original WAC goal of bringing disciplinary differences to students' and instructors' conscious awareness. The geneticist, who rated Disciplinary Socialization as a Very Important Goal, said that her generalist Fellows, although friendly, cooperative, and trying to be helpful, couldn't give her students much useful information, implying that they weren't familiar enough with issues or writing in genetics, also highlighting disciplinary differences.

For Questions 4 and 5, many instructors added that Writing Fellows helped them reach other writing-specific goals that did not appear on the survey, for example, product goals such as thesis-driven, organized arguments, and clear prose, and process goals such as avoiding procrastination, and sharing one's writing with peers and using their feedback to revise. They were reminding us of why they originally signed up to work with us—reasons that are related to their unanimous valuing of general analytical and critical abilities as a Very Important Goal; students' general analytical and critical abilities can be both developed and

communicated through learning to write clear, organized prose. Besides learning content, Writing to Learn is Writing to Learn to Be Critical and Analytical.

Confirming our suspicions that disciplinary commonalities are more important than specialized differences to liberal arts instructors, the key finding of the survey results is that general critical and analytical abilities were deemed more important by instructors than disciplinary socialization; even attitude change such as empathy development ranked higher than disciplinary socialization.

Limitations, Caveats, and Conclusions

Our study of Fellows, assignments, and professors has a number of limitations. First, our setting is the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS), not the entire University of Iowa. Although we can hire Fellows from the Colleges of Business and Engineering and have, in fact, hired two from Business, we only fellow courses in CLAS—the majority of which have been humanities and social science classes. Thus, not only are we not working with professional genres such as clinical reports in nursing and construction proposals in engineering, but we have not yet worked with any kind of writing in biology, chemistry, or physics. (We will fellow our first physics course, Nanoscience, in Spring, 2008). In fact, in our four years of existence, we have only fellowed three science courses--geoscience twice, health twice, and genetics once. In our local research, our sample size of instructors (25) is small, and all 17 Fellows whose writing about the debate we analyzed, also a small sample, were commenting and conferencing for the first time.

And yet this set of local Writing Fellows data based on our program participants' practical experiences--when analyzed in conjunction with Carter's (2007) meta-genres, Pemberton's (1995) transdisciplines, Young and LeCourt's (2000) Writing to Learn, and Hedley and Parker's (1991) and Wardle's (2004) Writing to Inquire---reminds us that WAC theories of specialized discourses, initially a counterbalance to the one-size-fits-all blindness to discourse distinctions, have perhaps strayed too far in the direction of disciplinary differences. Writing Fellows Programs work to restore WAC's balance by recognizing, highlighting, and valuing discourse similarities as well as differences.

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Appendix. Survey for Faculty Who Have Worked with Writing Fellows

Your Name _____

Your Dept _____

Your Discipline or Field _____

1. When you construct your writing assignments, to what extent is one of your goals to socialize your students to approximate the writing style and conventions of those of scholars in your discipline (e.g. Anthropology, Literature, Political Science, History)? Please put an X by a number on the scale of 1-4.

Not a goal	Somewhat Important Goal	Important Goal	Very Important Goal
1	2	3	4

2. When you construct your writing assignments, to what extent is one of your goals to use the assignment to develop your students' general analytical and critical abilities?

Not a goal	Somewhat Important Goal	Important Goal	Very Important Goal
1	2	3	4

3. When you construct your writing assignments, to what extent is one of your goals to encourage your students to examine their attitudes toward the issues under study in your course, for example, to encourage the development of students' empathy with certain beings or groups, past or present, real or fictional?

Not a goal	Somewhat Important Goal	Important Goal	Very Important Goal
1	2	3	4

4. Has the experience of working with Writing Fellows influenced any of your above responses? If so, how?

5. Please add any comments about your survey responses and your goals for assigning writing.

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