Disciplinary and its Discontents

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IWAC 2016

Linda Adler-Kassner, Shannon Brennan, and Heidi Estrem

Session Overview

Who We are

Introduction

Three Brief Examples

Application: handout and Happy Libs

Discussion and Extension

Writing as a subject of study and an activity (for WS)

Produced in specific contexts, for specific audiences, with specific purposes in mind

Writers need to learn to study writing in order to make conscious decisions

WTL/LTW

Writing:Learning

Content - ideas, trends, connections, facts

Applying methods - locating evidence or information, interpreting, analyzing

Ways of thinking - asking questions, adopting or representing perspectives

Introductory
(Broadly
applicable)

Connection to
disciplinary knowledge

Student experience

Novice

Expert

Specialized (sub-discipline)

Disciplinary concept (broad)

TC/Relationship to discipline

Level of learner

Beginner (i.e., GE)

Expert (i.e., grad)

Subdisciplinary concept (narrower)

Writing and disciplinarity: two threshold concepts

1) Writing is a way of enacting disciplinary identities.

1) Disciplinary identities are constructed through writing.

Threshold Concepts and Academic Disciplines in First-Year Composition:

How does students' explicit engagement with the concept of disciplinarity influence their thinking about Writing as a field of study?

What is an academic discipline?

53% "Don't know"
(9 students)

29% "Field of study"
(5 students)

18% "Field of study" +
some reference to
community (3 students)

What academic discipline are you most familiar with? What concept would you say is necessary to understand in order to move forward in that discipline?

4 students (23%) were able to answer this question.

"I am most familiar with the engineering discipline. I think physics concepts are...necessary in order to relate the differences between different equations and concepts."

Have you ever thought of Writing as a discipline?

59% "Yes"
(10 students)

41% "No"
(7 students)

From what you know about Writing, what concept or idea would you say is necessary to understand in order to move forward in that discipline?

Popular Responses:

"Grammar"

"Audience"

"Creativity"

"Critical Thinking"

"What is an academic discipline?" Week 7

27% "Field of study" (4 students)

73% "Field of study" + some reference to community (11 students)

Typical Student Response:
"An academic discipline is about how one specific subject is working, what people in the discipline do, how they communicate. What kind of resources they use, what is the writing like and so on. These features may distinguish one discipline from others."

What academic discipline are you most familiar with? What concept would you say is necessary to understand in order to move forward in that discipline? (Week 7)

Less Sophisticated Response:
"Political science is about analyzing political strategies chosen and is different than 'politics' itself."

More Sophisticated Response:
"In chemistry, nothing can ever be proven only proven wrong so people in this discipline must constantly challenge standing theories."

Education:

"To start, people must know that education discipline is developing continuously by doing researches are an important part."

Physics:

"It is also crucial to not stop once a discovery has been made, but rather use those discoveries to help propagate future experiments and research, as noted by TA Little."

Chemistry:

"Also, it's key to note that everyone...is striving to advance the field and to do that, they tend to engage in each other's works, rather than simply taking new information in."

Computer Science:

"To move forward, I have to understand that writing code is a teamwork; thus, we have to consider people while writing code."

Writing:

"The academic principle I am most familiar with at the moment is writing. In writing the concepts or ideas necessary to understand to move forward in this discipline is the function of writing in society, understanding that the purpose of writing changes in different contexts, and that there are multiple modes of writing and the importance of audience in writing." -Sandra

Threshold concept framework

"While [threshold concepts] may have initially been envisaged and used in order to inform studies of conceptual change within specific disciplinary settings, their real power may lie in their role in cross-disciplinary discussions and . . .in relating pedagogical practice to learner identities and institutional strategies."

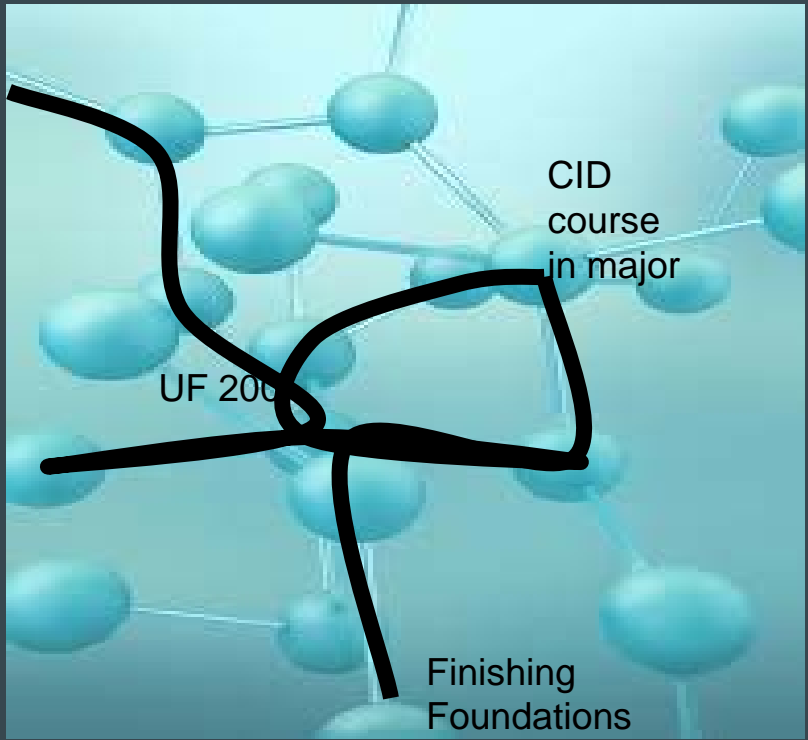Patrick Charmichael, "Threshold Concepts, Disciplinary Differences, and Cross-Disciplinary Discourse"

Threshold Concepts and Conversations About Writing

ENGL 101 and 102
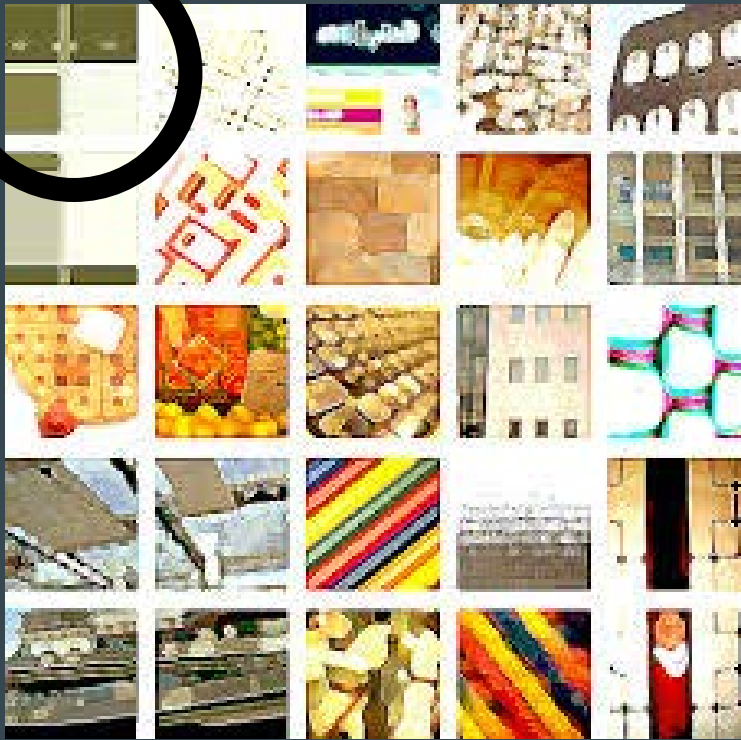
ULO 1: Written Comm

ENGL 101 and 102

CID course in major

UF 200

Finishing Foundations (Capstone)

Shifting the conversation about writing

from…

Why can't students _____ ?

To…

Questions about *learning*: How can I create and support moments of struggle and uncertainty —TC experiences?

Questions about *transfer*: How does my course connect to/build from others'?

Questions of *expertise*: What do I do that students need deliberate practice with, and how can I engage that practice?
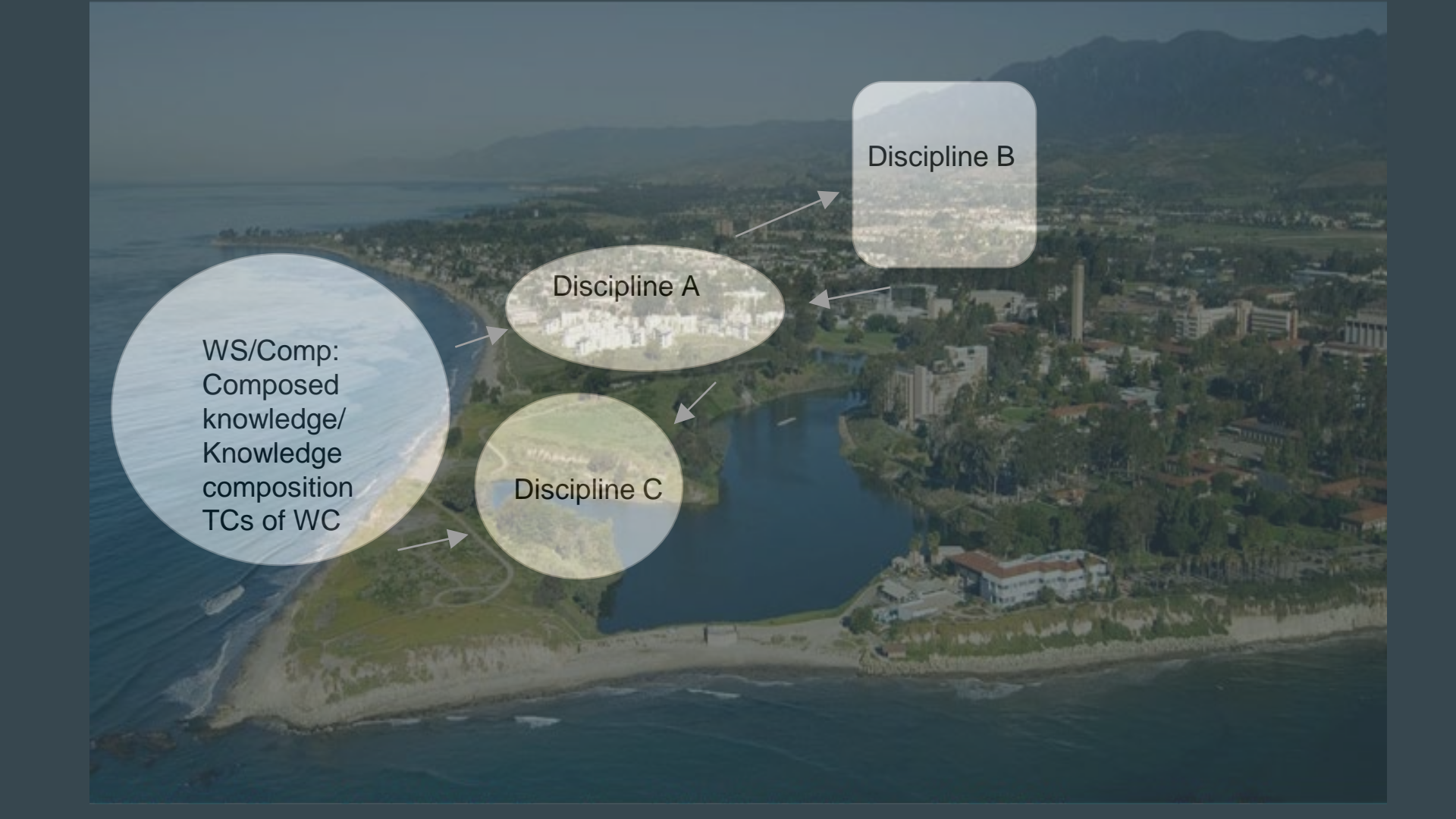
Threshold Concepts/WAC

Seminar focus: How can experts (like faculty members) make the constituent elements of their expertise more visible to novices (like learners)?

--Naming TCs

--Teaching through TCs

How does a particular perspective on disciplinarity (in our discipline) contribute to the seminar design?

Application: Happy Lib

Concluding/synthesizing (?) thoughts

TCs: lenses to look at epistemology/ontology

WAC: lenses to talk about writing.

Together: ways to talk about how writing accesses/reflects epistemologies and ontologies