

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 2015-2016, 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 (curriculum), how we teach it for 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 fall 2015. Meetings will be monthly and sometimes facilitated by technology.

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

General Education Student Learning Outcomes, Criterion

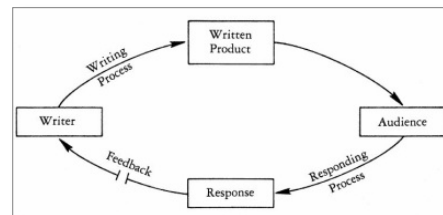
Two: Read, write, speak, and listen effectively so that the expectations of appropriate audiences in the academic, public, and private sectors are met.

2015-2016 | ELR Assessment Focus: Audience

In continuation of its work from 2014-2015, this academic year, the Department of English, Literature and Reading (ELR) will continue the process of enhancing its exit process for English 101 so that it best reflects its commitment to

assessing student learning; assuring critically reflective practice among instructors and students; and promoting professional development and the regular exchange of teaching strategies. In 2014-2015, we focused our attention on critical thinking and reconceptualizing the rubric whereby it is assessed, which coincided well with the college’s assessment focus on the first General Education student learning outcomes, i.e., critical thinking and problem solving.

For 2015-2016, Wright College has shifted its assessment focus to the second of the General Education student learning outcomes, which focuses on academic communication that



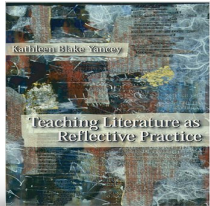
meets the expectations of diversely constituted audiences. Significantly, the criteria ELR uses to assess critical essays in English 101 include purpose and audience, specifically, assessing the degree to which students demonstrate competency in adopting consistently and appropriately the voice, tone and level of formality customary in academic writing.

Thus, for this academic year's assessment focus, **ELR will utilize the English 101 critical essay and rubric to determine to what extent, at the end of the semester, students demonstrate competency related to purpose and audience in academic writing.** This focus works well because not only do we have the opportunity to re-use the previous assessment instrument (thereby enabling greater critical engagement with and improvement of it), but also we have the ability to compare data received from spring 2015 on purpose and audience, which might enable very preliminary explorations of trends in student performance relative to purpose and audience and the other criteria. Moreover, focusing upon assessment in this way, for English 101, allows for a more profound engagement with the curriculum of that course.

Image: <http://justgingerly.weebly.com/audience-and-composition.html>

Reading Corner: Books on Teaching + Assessment — Literature

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

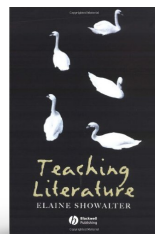


Teaching Literature as Reflective Practice by Yancey (Natl. Council of Teachers, 2004).

From NCTE, "...

Teaching Literature as Reflective Practice speaks to all those teachers who teach the "gen ed" literature course that their students must take to complete a general education or core curriculum requirement. These students – the 95 percent who are not English majors– are the students we hope will become active and reflective members of a reading public. Given this goal, Kathleen Blake Yancey outlines a course located in reflective practice and connected to readings in the world..."

Teaching Literature by Showalter (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002).

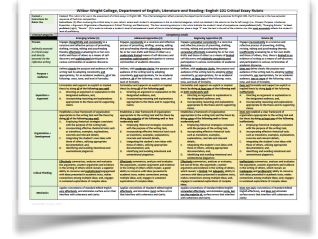


From Amazon, "Showalter's wide-ranging reflections address practical, theoretical, and methodological issues. She starts out by describing the anxieties of teaching literature and by outlining the major theories and methods circulating in the field. She then goes on to look separately at teaching drama, fiction, poetry, and theory, and to explore ways to teach teaching. Finally, she investigates the moral issues involved in teaching, and the practical ethics of handling touchy subjects, from sexuality to suicide..."

Any book, article, film or web site recommendations? Please send them to Helen Doss, PhD at hdoss@ccc.edu.

2014-2015: ELR Assessment of Critical Thinking | Results

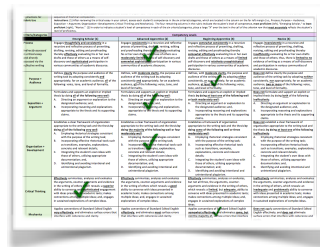
Context and Process: In fall 2014, the Department of English, Literature and Reading (ELR) underwent the process of reconceptualizing its exit process for English 101 in order to better reflect its commitment to assessing student learning, critical thinking, critical reflective practice and professional development. This process revealed a profound commitment to critical thinking as integral to writing (generally) and assessment of student writing in English 101 (specifically). Then, the ELR assessment committee developed a new tool for the summative assessment of English 101 student writing competencies via a "critical essay." This process required 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.



In spring 2015, we drafted a department-relevant definition of critical thinking using the words and phrases most commonly used by the participants

Critical thinking is the process of dialoging with and identifying patterns in texts; reflecting on and questioning one's own assumptions and those of others; and communicating clearly while thinking deeply and logically. A well-practiced critical thinker engages in a transformative process of assessing information through analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Critical thinking encourages creative exploration, civic engagement as well as academic and professional competence.

in a survey administered in October 2014. In addition, we reviewed the ELR department mission and student learning outcomes, both of which can be found [here](#). Moreover, we considered the newly developed Wilbur Wright College definition of critical thinking, which asserts that it is "a process of identifying patterns or ideas within a set of ideas, texts, and/or points of view; interpreting or explaining that pattern; and justifying that interpretation or explanation as meaningful" (*AQIPment Newsletter*, Fall 2014).



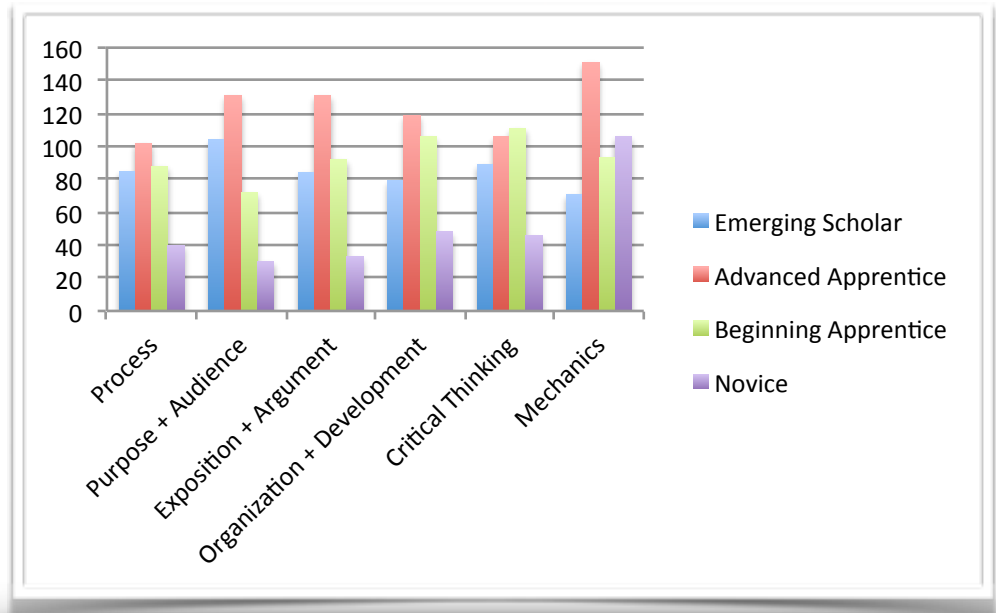
At the end of spring 2015, faculty teaching English 101, after having met with their cohort members and chairs for the purpose of discussing and workshopping critical essay assignments that met the requirements shared earlier in the term, assessed their students' final critical essays using the English 101 Critical Essay Rubric. Exemplars of each level of competencies were discussed among members of cohorts; all completed rubrics were submitted for analysis.

Limitations: Rubrics from 40% of English 101 sections were available for analysis. Additionally, the results might seem to comment primarily on consistencies or the lack thereof among faculty assessments of student learning, rather than on student learning itself. This was, in part, due to a desire to allow for greater instructor freedom with critical essay assignment design. Thus, the use of the rubric was normed within cohorts but not across all sections offered.

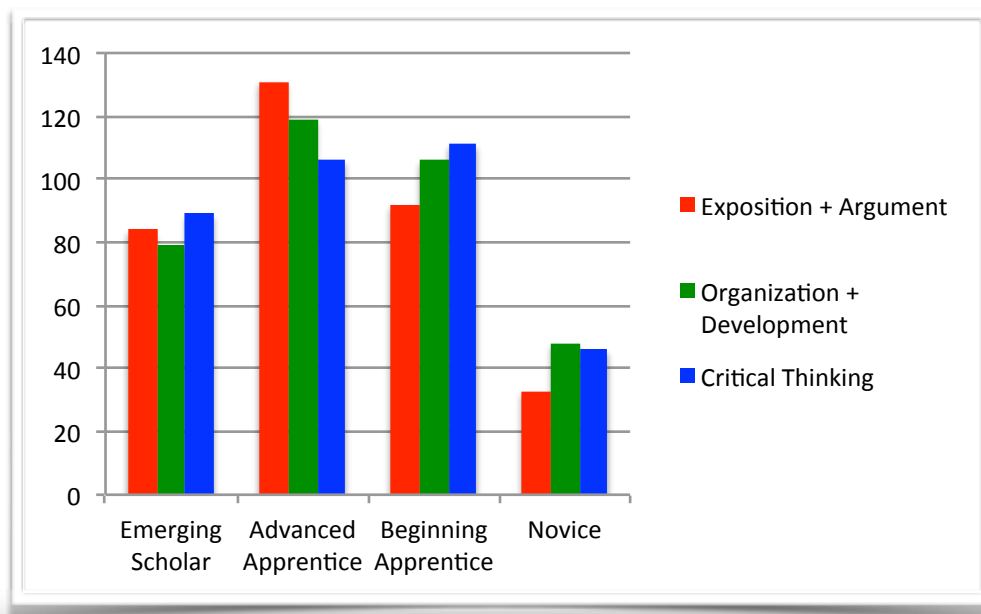
Analysis: That which follows is a preliminary analysis of the data received by 4 September 2015. By this date, 40% of all sections of English 101 had submitted their completed rubrics to the assessment coordinator via print/mailbox or email. The numbers on the y-axes represent the number of times a specific level of competency was selected relative to a specific criterion; they represent neither the numbers of students in, instructors of nor course sections offered of English 101.

Competency Across All Criteria

This graph illustrates overall competency across all criteria.

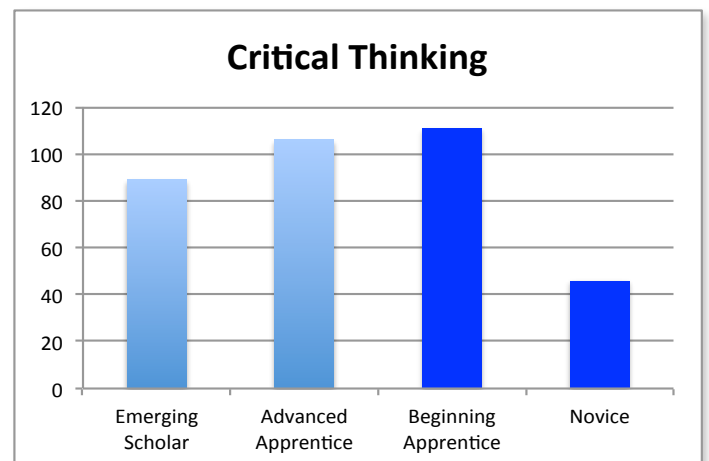
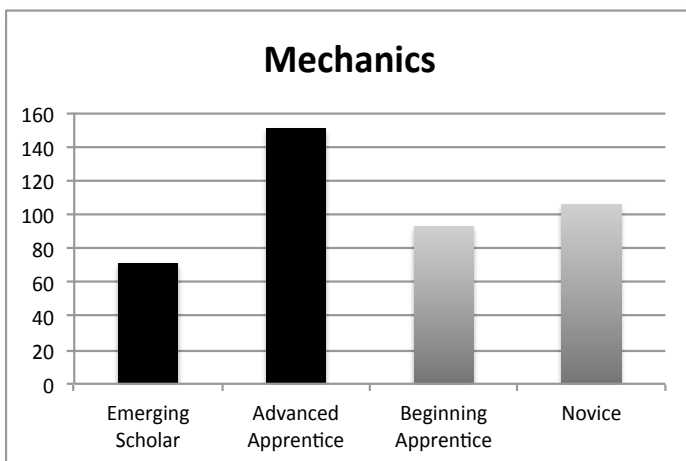
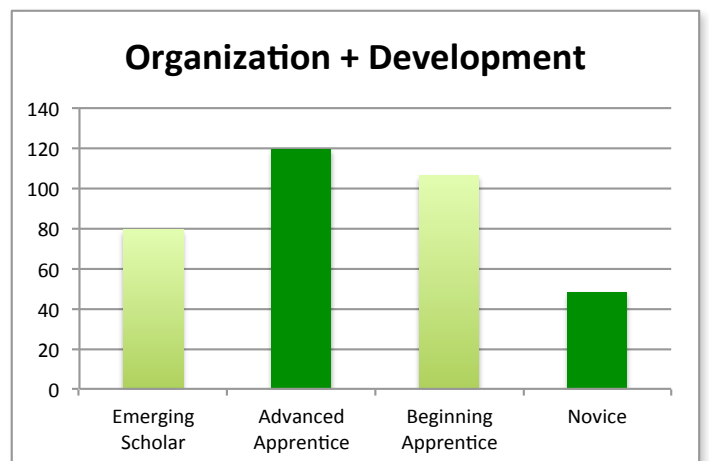
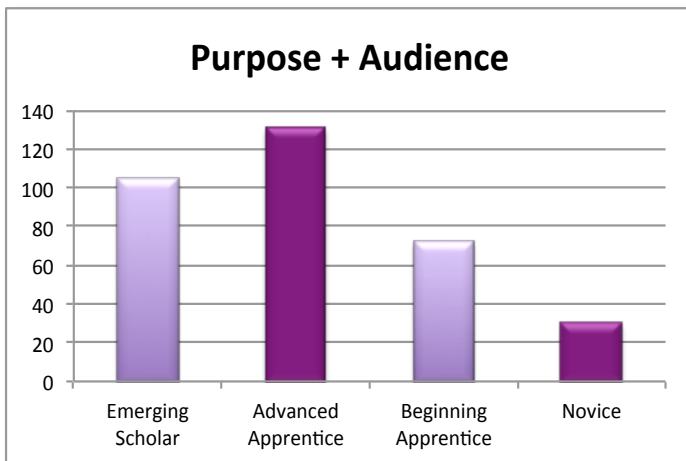
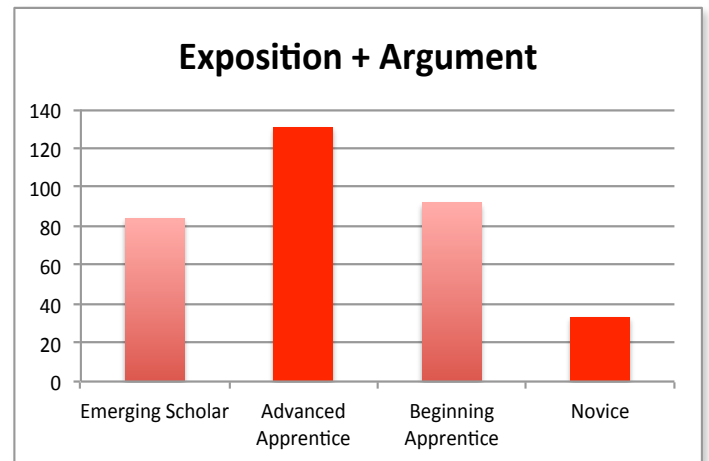
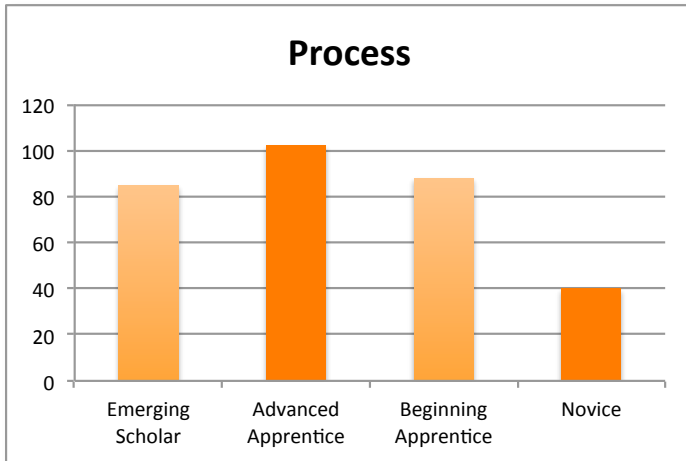


Competency in Critical Thinking



This graph illustrates overall competency across the three areas identified as related to critical thinking as defined by the college and the department.

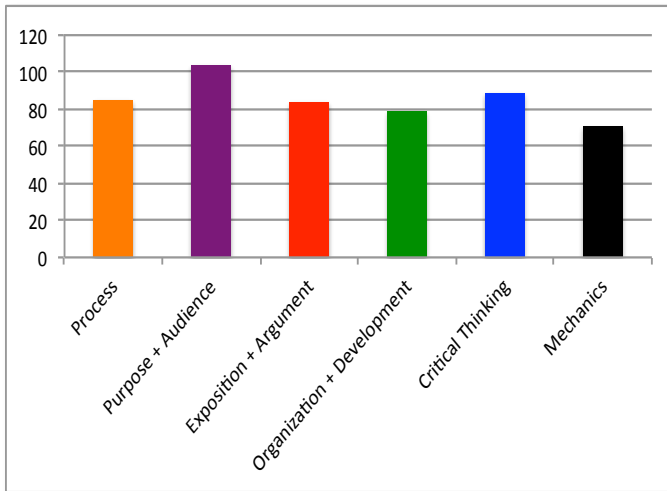
Criteria by Competency



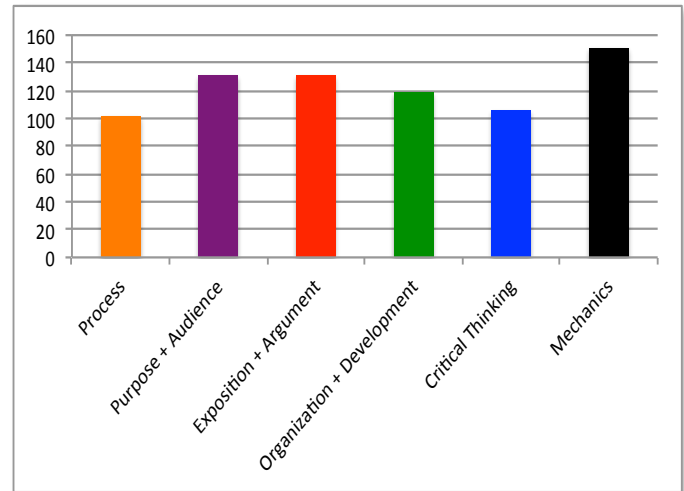
The graphs above illustrate competency levels for each criterion. The highest and lowest competency levels have been darkened.

Competency by Criteria

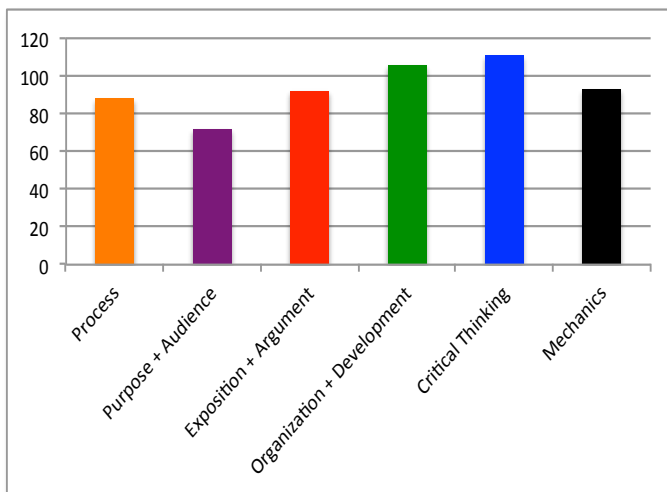
Emerging Scholar by Criteria



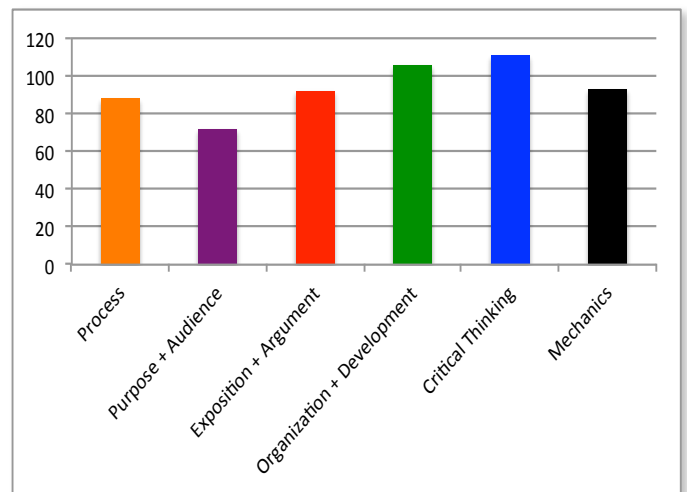
Advanced Apprentice by Criteria



Beginning Apprentice by Criteria



Novice by Criteria



The graphs above illustrate each competency level across all criteria.

Conclusions: Although these data have been analyzed only preliminarily and must be discussed with the ELR Assessment Committee for fullest interpretation and additional limitation notation, there are some preliminary findings of note. At the end of English 101, based upon these data: **(1)** most students are performing at the competency level of “Advanced Apprentice” in all critical thinking-associated criteria; **(2)** while “Critical Thinking” decreases slightly in “Advanced Apprentice” and “Emerging Scholar,” competency in “Exposition + Argument” and “Organization + Development” increases; **(3)** as competency increases in the three critical thinking-associated criteria, facility in “Mechanics” decreases with the exception of the “Advanced Apprentice” level; **(4)** “Critical Thinking” achieves its highest competency at “Beginning Apprentice” level; **(5)** as expected, there is a strong correlation among the three critical thinking-associated criteria across all competencies, which affirms our original supposition that these three areas were interrelated in college-level writing; **(6)** competency in “Process” and “Purpose + Audience” increases significantly from “Novice” to “Emerging Scholar,” but peaks with the “Advanced Apprentice” competency level; and, **(7)** the “Mechanics” criterion is the highest rated skill, across all competency levels, especially “Advanced Apprentice,” followed closely by “Critical Thinking”; and, **(8)** overall, at the time of the final critical essay, there are more students performing at higher competency levels across all criteria, which might have important implications for English 102-readiness.