

Thinking and Writing Beyond Two Cultures: STEM, WAC/WID, and the Changing Academy

Fifth Biennial International Conference at Quinnipiac University, Hamden, CT

Friday, November 21st and Saturday, November 22, 2014

In 2008 *The Times Literary Supplement* included the publication of C. P. Snow's 1959 Rede Lecture, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, on its list of the 100 books that have most influenced Western public discourse since the Second World War. Although Snow's lecture prompted a dustup between scientists and literary elites over who could lay claim to the superior form of knowledge, over time the sides and tenor of the "Two Cultures Debate" have changed. As the debate has expanded throughout the natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences to include various disciplinary groups and the beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives with which they are bound together as "cultures," it has evolved into a conversation about how knowledge is recognized, valued, and taught across the cultures of the university. The 2014 conference aims to advance this conversation through presentations that attend to the unfolding legacy of the Two Cultures Debate as well as those that revisit and challenge Snow's original formulation.

The opening conversation, "Science Diplomacy: Critical Thinking and Writing Across the Academy and the World," will be led by Vaughan Turekian, Chief International Officer for the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and Director of AAAS's Center for Science Diplomacy. Working in places where diplomats do not or cannot normally go—Cuba, North Korea, Burma, Syria—the Center for Science Diplomacy addresses problems in foreign policy by engaging partners in a process to develop a shared understanding of science issues and the language that defines them. Building upon this concept of science diplomacy, the conversation will explore how academics from across the disciplines and with widely divergent views understand "science," as well as other common terms and practices, such as "research," "diplomacy," and "critical thinking." This exchange is intended to elicit attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives in order to consider how they might interact with the disciplines to form cultures, and to reflect on how the various cultures of the university can meet continuously shifting global challenges.



Kathleen Blake Yancey, Kellogg W. Hunt Professor of English and Distinguished Research Professor at Florida State University, will deliver the keynote address, "Concepts and Practices in Flux: Critical Thinking and Writing Across the Disciplinary Cultures of the Academy." When our students enter higher education, they tend to see it as a single entity, as a college or university with a homogeneous culture. But of course, no institution is a single entity. Much like a big city with multiple neighborhoods—each with its own practices and rituals—college is a world with multiple cultures, which we think of as disciplines, each of which has its own language, its own problems, acceptable evidence, and genres. One important task for faculty, therefore, is to help students understand how a given culture is both similar to and different from other cultures within the academy. Doing so makes the implicit features of the discipline explicit and therefore available and helpful to our students. And because each student brings with him or her unique prior knowledge and experiences, it is critical that students are asked to map—for themselves—these similarities and differences and to articulate what they mean for thinking and writing in a given discipline. Drawing from experiences of both students and teachers in various disciplines, this talk will outline how such articulation and reflection can support student learning.



The conference will be organized into three categories, each focusing on a different dimension of the debate: **Philosophy and Politics**; **Pedagogies, Programs, and Curricula**; **Critical Thinking and Writing**. While scholars and teachers are invited to submit proposals that engage in or with one of these dimensions of the debate, the conference intends to promote, across categories, a multi-dimensional conversation that addresses the following questions (and perhaps others):

How do linkages between critical thinking and writing operate within and/or even define a “culture” of the university?

How do linkages between critical thinking and writing vary among cultures that exist *as* the major divisions of knowledge (natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences), *within* the major divisions of knowledge (biology, literature, criminal justice, etc.), and *across* the major divisions of knowledge (science journalism, sports studies, medical humanities, etc.)?

How are linkages between critical thinking and writing shared across the cultures of the university?

How might linkages between critical thinking and writing influence and/or be influenced by the shifting cultures of the university?

How do linkages between critical thinking and writing interface with technology in and/or across the cultures of the university?

How might linkages between critical thinking and writing be part of integrating high school students and their prior knowledge into the cultures of the university?

How might linkages between critical thinking and writing aid in transfer of learning within and/or across the cultures of the university?

How might linkages between critical thinking and writing in and/or across the cultures of the university prepare students for graduate and/or professional work?

For more information about the call for proposals, registration, or the program, contact Paul Pasquaretta, the Quinnipiac University Research and Writing Institute Coordinator, at Paul.Pasquaretta@Quinnipiac.edu



Appearing in Fall 2014:

**Critical Thinking and Writing
in the STEM Disciplines**
A Special Issue of *Double Helix*

Guest Editor

Lisa Emerson, Massey University, NZ