

LEARNING AT THE THRESHOLD: WAC PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Melissa Bender, Assistant Director
Writing Across the Curriculum
University of California, Davis

DAVID BARTHOLOMAE

“INVENTING THE UNIVERSITY,” 1986

Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion...He 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.

...And this understandably causes problems.

JAN MEYER & RAY LAND, 2003

A threshold concept can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THRESHOLD CONCEPTS

- Transformative
- Irreversible
- (Potentially) troublesome

STUDENT RESPONSE TO TROUBLESOME KNOWLEDGE

- Stressful
- Debilitating
- Frustrating
- Intensely emotional
- Shocked
- Upset
- Hopeless
- Very anxious

DEEP LEARNING

Synthesizing information with prior learning in ways that *become part of one's thinking and approaching new phenomena, and efforts to see things from different perspectives.*

(Ramsden, 2003; Tagg, 2003; Anderson et al. 2015)

WRITING TO COMMUNICATE (*TO SHOW*)

- High-stakes writing assignments.
- Students demonstrate that they have met course objectives and can apply course concepts in their own writing.

WRITING TO LEARN (*TO KNOW*)

- Low-stakes, informal writing.
- Designed to focus on a particular learning outcome.
- Students explore concepts prior to demonstrating mastery of concepts.

WRITING TO LEARN ACTIVITIES

- *The Minute Paper*

WRITING TO LEARN ACTIVITIES

- The Minute Paper
- Change the Audience

WRITING TO LEARN ACTIVITIES

- Troublesome knowledge journal entries:
 1. How does your personal experience relate to what you studied today?
 2. What effect is this course having on your personal life, beliefs, your values, your previous understanding of things?
 3. How does what we have been studying lately relate to other courses or other parts of this course?

WRITING TO LEARN ACTIVITIES

- Directed reading responses:

How do you see ethos, pathos, and logos at work in Watson and Crick's "Molecular Structure of Nucleic Acid"?

LEARNING AT THE THRESHOLD: WAC PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Melissa Bender, Assistant Director
Writing Across the Curriculum
University of California, Davis