Community college students can present some unique challenges for instructors. Some students lack interest in college-sponsored activities and social events, perhaps because they are commuters or attend classes part-time. In the classroom, their clipped responses, body language, seating choices, and cellphone screen fixation can signal a reluctance to engage with other students. In my pursuit of instructional methods to promote learning through social engagement in my community college reading course, I found *Inspiring Dialogue: Learning to Talk in the English Classroom*, by Mary M. Juzwik, Carlin Borsheim-Black, Samantha Caughlin, and Anne Heintz, to be a clearly written guide into the world of dialogism that is grounded in Russian theorist Bakhtin’s perception of discourse that shapes language and thought in a “socio-cognitive event,” according to Martin Nystrand in the foreword (ix).

Juzwik et al. describe dialogic discourse as promoting active listening, validating students’ opinions in a safe environment, and creating conditions for students’ authentic questioning and thinking that shapes the direction of the dialogue (27). To clarify and support this role of dialogic discourse, the authors begin by distinguishing between dialogue and discussion; dialogic responses build upon previous statements and questions stimulating further responses, whereas discussion is more equivalent to listening and responding (5). Unlike the traditional classroom practice of Initiation, Response, and Evaluation (IRE), students in a dialogic classroom direct their responses to a teacher-initiated question or statement back to the teacher or to other students who then respond similarly. Participants employ dialogic moves such as *uptake questioning* (28) or *revoicing* (29) to advance the conversation that stimulates the learning (5). Reciprocity of learning is achieved as teachers and students give value and respect to what is spoken and how it is spoken (31) during their exchange of thoughts.

Nystrand cites empirical studies that support the efficacy of dialogic classroom practices by indicating strong correlations between dialogic instruction and student literacy gains (x); however, this practice is not the norm in most American schools (4), particularly in urban schools (6). Juzwik et al. assert that dialogic instruction would develop more equitable and inclusive classrooms (4, 6) in which students are more engaged, have more voice, and exercise greater agency.
Inspiring Dialogue: Learning to Talk in the English Classroom is organized into three parts. In Part 1, “A Dialogic Stance,” Juzwik et al. discuss the theory and research behind dialogism. The authors include teacher-led and student-led dialogic tools (37–41) such as Socratic Seminars (49). The dialogic questioning guide and the response-to-response guide support the adoption of a dialogic stance and serve as a reminder of the instructor’s positioning in a dialogic classroom. To assist teachers, Juzwik et al. include user-friendly graphics and handouts as tools to prepare, plan, and reflect upon dialogic practice. A companion website consisting of additional resources including transcripts, reproducibles, unit outlines, and Professional Learning Community (PLC) videos (12) is provided. Beginning in Part 1 and woven throughout the book are authentic classroom transcripts that document teachers’ and teacher candidates’ classroom dialogic interactions with secondary students.

Since students seldom engage in dialogue that contributes to the content and steers the direction of a lesson, Juzwik et al. stress the necessity for careful planning and scaffolding (9). Part 2, “Planning for Dialogic Teaching,” includes guides for both daily planning and long-term planning for English language arts in secondary classrooms. An example of dialogic teaching of writing in a community college course is found in this section (79–85) along with suggestions for sequencing dialogic tools (58–59).

Part 3, “Transforming Practice through Dialogic Inquiry,” features dialogic teaching vignettes, troubleshooting discussions, and a framework for establishing a collaborative PLC. Several common classroom challenges, such as losing control of the dialogue, responding to offensive responses, and managing side conversations, are addressed. Juzwik et al. include a discourse analysis chart (95–97) for recording dialogic practice to assist educators in their analysis, reflection, and revision of their classroom practice.

The authors’ purpose for writing this book is not to convert readers to dialogism; their objective is to instruct, guide, and support teachers and students in transitioning from a traditional classroom to a dialogic classroom. Although the focus of this book is taking a dialogic stance in the secondary classroom, the practice as presented is appropriate and adaptable for higher education use across disciplines. Community college faculty will find Juzwik et al.’s Inspiring Dialogue: Learning to Talk in the English Classroom to be a foundational reference when entering the world of dialogic teaching.

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Academic Writing: Concepts and Connections

In the composition classroom, one of the biggest challenges teachers face is convincing students the worth of the work we ask them to do. Teresa Thonney’s new interdisciplinary
rhetoric text, Academic Writing: Concepts and Connections, seeks to address this challenge by helping students “make connections between what they learn in their composition classes and what they read and write in whatever field they choose as a major” (xxiii). Thonney attempts to set students up to understand academic writing in its broader context rather than simply as part of the English general education requirements. This approach builds on Thonney’s claim in her 2011 article, “Teaching the Conventions of Academic Discourse,” that “there are shared features that unite academic writing, and that by introducing these features to first-year students we provide them with knowledge they can apply and refine in each new discipline they encounter” (347). Students begin this process by engaging with interdisciplinary readings in order to develop core writing skills and begin the pre-professionalization inherent in the modern university.

To further this goal, Thonney includes a number of chapters on how students can participate in a discourse community and curate interdisciplinary skills—such as understanding context, reading critically, conducting research, utilizing source material, and revising (both alone and in a collaborative environment). Each chapter ends with a collection of paired readings from various disciplines in order to allow students to see how the concepts discussed in the chapter play out in professional writing. These paired readings allow the students to engage with the ways in which “the book itself practices what it preaches” by encouraging metacognition and genre analysis (xxv). The chapters also include an “applying the concepts” section, which is intended to help students move beyond simply reading chapters and instead actively begin to use the concepts they encounter. In the expanded edition of the book, there are five additional chapters featuring readings addressing a theme: social networks; perceptions and perspectives; language, literacy, and technology; violence and justice; and conservation and the environment. The additional readings draw from the various disciplines discussed throughout the text, offering a broad spectrum of perspectives on the various concepts. These readings could prove useful in a themed composition course—giving students easy access to a set of standardized readings.

Academic Writing: Concepts and Connections does not follow the more traditional textbook format of outlining the different assignments typically found in composition classrooms. Instead, the book follows the same theoretical underpinnings of Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Down’s Writing about Writing: A College Reader. By focusing on skill development, students are more able to “transfer knowledge” between their differing college courses and develop the ability to be “alert to . . . what they are doing [as they write] rather than just doing things automatically and unconsciously” (Wardle and Downs vi). Both texts place an emphasis on the writing process—particularly reflecting on how one writes—rather than the product that is ultimately created. This approach is intended to assist students in developing a core group of skills they may not have gained during their previous education before moving onto the more complex skills necessary to survive both in academia and the professional
world. Thonney attempts to scaffold this development by taking students from the basics of the rhetorical triangle and finishing with the construction of an original research project—asking the reader to reflect on how the skills used in each aspect of the writing course can then be used in a different context. The extent to which this approach works is questionable, however, since the typical composition classroom comprises so many different learners at diverse stages of writing development.

In the two-year college setting, this book could prove valuable because of its practicality. A nontraditional student returning for a degree or a student who intends to go directly into the professional sphere would benefit from the pragmatic focus on building key skills. This book would also support many of the traditional composition classes, since the skill sets found within it support the assignments typically found in first-year composition programs—particularly with its emphasis on working toward original research. However, because of its skills-based approach, Academic Writing: Concepts and Connections will not work in every classroom. It does not give explicit directions on how to write a critique, nor does it offer a checklist of everything a research paper should include. For some, the added workload this lack creates will outweigh the benefits of the text. However, for those who focus on developing skill sets and placing composition within a broader context, this textbook could be an effective rhetoric to help create a composition experience that moves beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

**Works Cited**


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**Teaching, Learning, and the Holocaust: An Integrative Approach**

by Howard Tinberg and Ronald Weisberger.


135 pp.

“Acknowledging the faults and frailty of human memory should not demean its sanctity; on the contrary, memory’s inability to achieve perfection should be seen as a reflection of the human condition itself, and by extension a ‘pure’ form of humanity’s interconnectedness” (qtd. in Tinberg and Weisberger 68). These poignant thoughts on the slippery nature of memory are not from a professional writer, but from one student sample in *Teaching, Learning, and the Holocaust: An Integrative Approach*, a detailed account of English professor Howard Tinberg and historian Ronald Weisberger’s spring 2011 course.”

"Remembering the
Holocaust in Literature and History.” Much more than a simple study of interdisciplinary practice emerges from this work in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL); the seamless way the authors parallel key issues in Holocaust studies to students’ evolving thoughts about these traumatic events distinguishes this book and makes it an instructive teaching resource.

Tinberg and Weisberger publically examine their interdisciplinary class on the Shoah, the Hebrew word for “catastrophe” that refers to the Holocaust throughout the text. They begin by describing the complex network of people and places that form the backdrop of the course, providing accounts of their own personal and academic history, which led them to the Shoah and to Bristol Community College, located in a former industrial hub in Massachusetts. A concern relevant for community college instructors is the discussion of “the place of such a course in an institution that focuses on general education and includes students for whom a college education is seen as having practical application toward obtaining jobs and career skills” (24). Despite fears that such a career-focused environment would discourage enrollment, the course did indeed run for many years, the authors postulate, because of the ways the topic appealed to the “imagination and commitment” (24) of the students.

Though often difficult to achieve, the course content and method revolve around “true disciplinary integration” (26). Since historical studies emphasize causation and literary studies focus on analyzing the formal aspects of a text, merging these methods was a challenging task. This interdisciplinary approach, and the students’ limited knowledge of the subject, prompted Tinberg and Weisberger to offer students a wide array of sources: multiple genres of literary texts, historical accounts, survivor testimony, and even period music provided a deep understanding of the controversies and critical conversations about the Shoah. The authors’ distinction between early assignments that divided historical and literary content and later ones that “explicitly embrace[d] our disciplines and call[ed] upon students to work at the intersection of disciplines” (5) will help readers recognize that what often passes for integrative studies is not truly integrated.

Another innovative feature of the seminar frames instruction and learning within critical terms of the Holocaust. In studying the role of the bystander, students themselves move away from the bystander role to gain “greater agency” (51). Useful strategies for navigating traumatic subject matter are also provided. Bearing witness to traumatic subjects can elicit emotional responses, sometimes distancing and sometimes engaging students. While some students have trouble processing disturbing material, others express an empathy that only skims the surface of emotion, especially when it comes with a morbid fascination with the traumatic artifacts of the Holocaust. Survivor testimony can therefore be problematic if used in ways that exploit the victims. Students’ responses become more nuanced as they learn to assimilate differences between survivors’ memory and the historical record, coming to understand how “history is rendered and memory reconstructed” (63).
reflect on what the students and authors gained in this semester-long class, and what previously held notions they had to “unlearn” (95), particularly regarding accountability and definitions of survivors and perpetrators.

Instructors interested in adapting the Shoah as a topic for interdisciplinary exploration will find the curriculum guide, including a syllabus, reading schedule, and exams, useful and adaptable. More important, the strategies honed over a decade will provide a model for anyone interested in integrative approaches that deepen student knowledge through critical, flexible, and metacognitive reflection on a range of sources. The one caveat is that the course described was specifically designed for an honors program with students who will likely continue their studies at four-year colleges; the curriculum will therefore need to be customized to account for varying institutional contexts. Though the text focuses on a specific population, Tinberg and Weisberger’s narrative illustrates the value of disciplinary integration for any group of students.

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Call for Proposals: 2016 Graduate Research Network

The Graduate Research Network (GRN) invites proposals for its 2016 workshop, to be held May 19, 2016, at the Computers and Writing Conference hosted by St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York. The C&W Graduate Research Network is an all-day preconference event, open to all registered conference participants at no charge. Roundtable discussions group those with similar interests with discussion leaders who facilitate discussion and offer suggestions for developing research projects and finding suitable venues for publication. We encourage anyone interested or involved in graduate education and scholarship—students, professors, mentors, and interested others—to participate in this important event. The GRN welcomes those pursuing work at any stage, from those just beginning to consider ideas to those whose projects are ready to pursue publication. Participants are also invited to apply for travel funding through the CW/GRN Travel Grant Fund. Deadline for submissions is April 19, 2016. For more information or to submit a proposal, visit our website at http://www.gradresearchnetwork.org or email Janice Walker at j walker@georgiasouthern.edu.