

The University Curriculum at Quinnipiac

Impact of Assessment on Program
Development in the Common General
Education Seminars

The Quinnipiac University Curriculum

Skills -- Quinnipiac graduates will:

- Demonstrate an ability to **communicate well in written and oral form**. (literacy)
- Demonstrate appropriate numerical literacy. (numeracy)

Competencies -- Quinnipiac graduates will:

- Display an understanding of, and facility with quantitative reasoning. This will include the ability to work with numbers, to understand how they are used symbolically and as tools for managing their world.
- Display an understanding of the scientific method and **an appreciation for rational, logical and critical inquiry**. This should include an understanding of the many advances that have been made through this method in the natural, biological and social sciences as well as the ways scientific pursuit continues to shape our world.
- Display an ability to use technological and informational resources and tools to pursue continued learning through research and other forms of inquiry.

The Quinnipiac University Curriculum ... continued

- Display and demonstrate an **appreciation for the cultures of the pluralistic American community**. This will include an understanding of dominant American cultural traditions and an awareness of other cultural traditions that have contributed to a uniquely pluralistic American heritage.
- Display a fundamental **knowledge of the world community and an ability to appreciate a culture other than their own**. This will include an appreciation for and knowledge of geography and the major world cultures and political traditions.

Dispositions -- Quinnipiac graduates will:

- Be prepared to assume the role of **informed citizenship**.
- Display the **self-knowledge**, self-confidence, and integrity to become leaders in their communities.
- Demonstrate an **appreciation for difference in all its forms**, and display an ability to grow and develop in a world of “diverse cultures and people.”

Map Objectives to QU 101: The Individual in the Community (First Year Seminar)

Students will demonstrate an ability to:

- critically examine roles of an individual in community from variety of perspectives
- make plausible interpretations and express informed opinions
- explore and describe human nature from several academic perspectives
- use evidence to evaluate topics including ethics, citizenship and diversity

Map Objectives to QU 201: Our National Community (Various Topics)

Students will demonstrate an ability to:

- understand and appreciate the cultures of the pluralistic American community, including dominant and other American cultural traditions in a way that articulates an appreciation for difference in all its forms;
- critically examine what it means to assume a role of informed citizenship and leadership in the United States of America;
- use information resources for quantitative and qualitative research and inquiry in critical examinations of major themes and concepts that structure American life;

Map Objectives to QU 201: Our National Community (Various Topics)

Students will demonstrate an ability to:

- use evidence to develop and evaluate positions regarding topics covered in the seminar, including historical, political, literary and cultural perspectives;
- make plausible interpretations and express informed opinions about topics covered in the seminar and communicate well in written and oral form.

Embedded Assignments for Assessment of Learning Outcomes

- Late March 2004, QU101 assessment subcommittee developed general assessment plan including:
 - a set common questions,
 - an early reflective assignment, and
 - a late analytic and argumentative assignment
- Late Fall 2006, QU201 faculty development committee agreed to:
 - a set of common questions, and
 - a research-oriented analytic and argumentative assignment

QU 101 Fall 2004

THREE COMMON ASSIGNMENTS: EARLY, MIDDLE AND LATE TERM

- Assignment 1 -- Consider your own situations: are you like the Omelans who stay, or the ones who walk away? What do you understand is your task here? Consider two questions about your own life: “Who am I?” and “Why am I here (at Quinnipiac)?”
- Assignment 2 -- If the readings tell us that we all have individual rights, how do we balance our individual rights against the rights of the community? How do you integrate “who you are/why you are here” as an individual with who you are as a member of the community
- Assignment 3 -- Based on your experiences and discussion of the course readings, apply the problem of the “gulf between what we are and what we think we are” (Maalouf) to answer the two key questions of your previous portfolio essays: “Who are you?” and “Why are you here?”

QU 101 Fall 2004

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC DEVELOPMENT

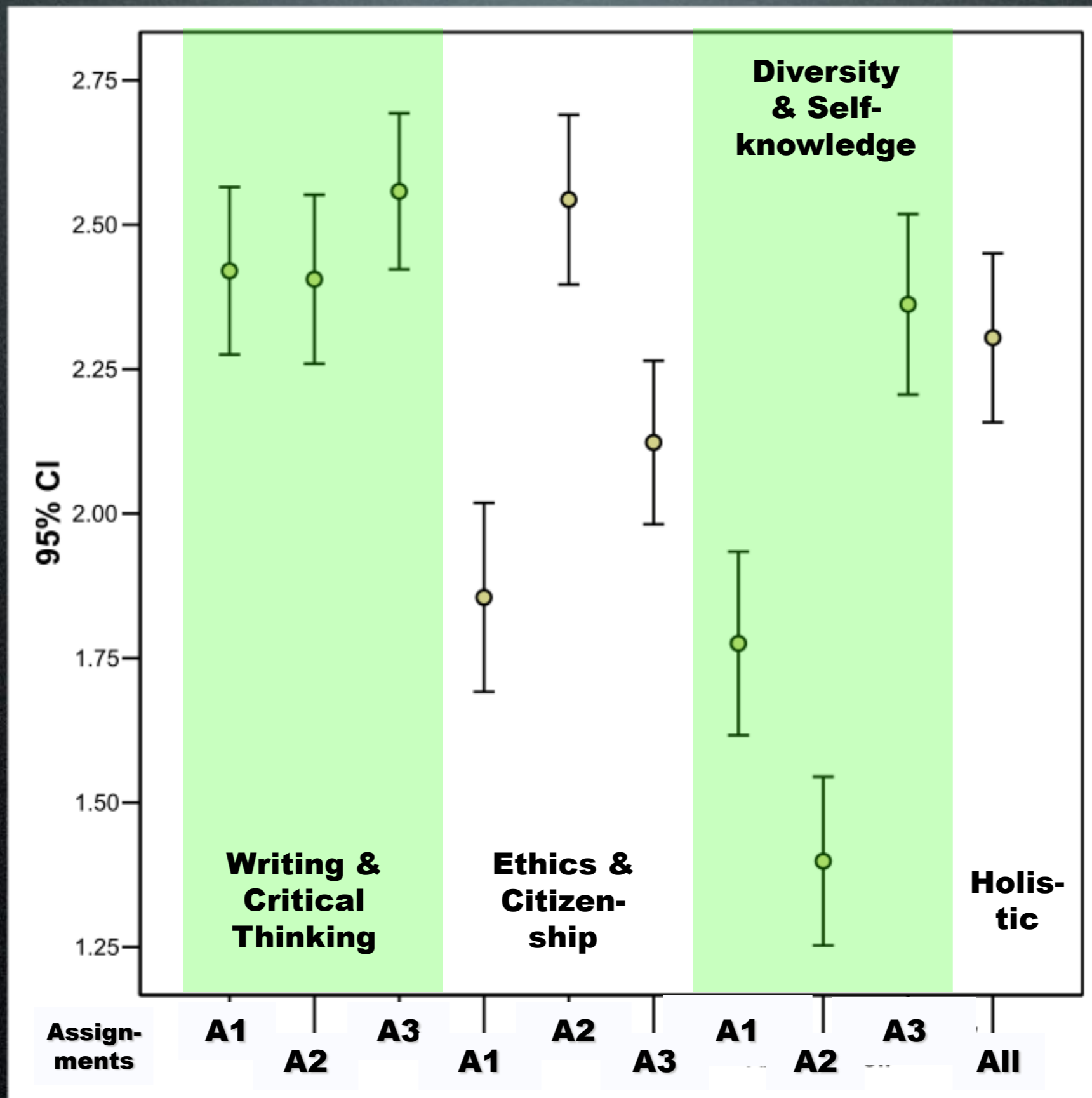
- Portfolio rubric for program review: 0 to 4 point scale for 4 measures developed through group review and discussion of representative student work from entire collection. This process also served to “norm” the readers, who came from faculty who taught or helped develop the course.
 - Writing and critical thinking for each assignment
 - Ethics and citizenship for each assignment
 - Diversity and self-knowledge for each assignment
 - Holistic performance at the portfolio level

QU 101 Fall 2004

SCORING OF SAMPLE PAPERS

- Stratified sample of 50 portfolios selected for assessment
- Each portfolio read by 3 readers
- No reader scored a portfolio from a student in his/her own QU101 section
- Results tabulated and discussed through
 - Campus-wide Excellence in Education Seminar Series
 - QU 101 Faculty Meetings
 - University Curriculum Committee Meetings
 - Academic Affairs Council Meeting

Portfolio Means by Assignment



QU 101 Fall 2004

ASSESSMENT RESULTS LEADING TO CHANGE

- The writing assignments varied in their emphasis on ethics & citizenship, and diversity & self-knowledge, making comparison across assignments difficult for these areas
- Student focus groups provided reassurance that QU 101 was valuable in providing a place for open discussion, and in promoting a bond between faculty and students
- Faculty feedback and student course evaluations agreed in identifying two areas of concern: too much assigned reading, and a lack of flow within the course

QU 101 Fall 2004

CHANGES MADE AFTER ASSESSMENT

- Changed embedded writing prompts for writing assignments to focus more generally on the individual in community, and dropped the middle assignment so that only two writing samples were collected -- one at the beginning and one at the end of the course
- Moved first reading assignment to become a summer reading assignment referenced in orientation and providing a bridge between residential life and the first year seminar
- Reorganized the syllabus around four big questions and grouped the readings within these four questions
- Created a hierarchy of required and elective readings to preserve commonality while allowing flexibility for faculty to reduce the total amount of reading assigned and/or add additional required content

QU 101 Fall 2004

CHANGES MADE AFTER ASSESSMENT

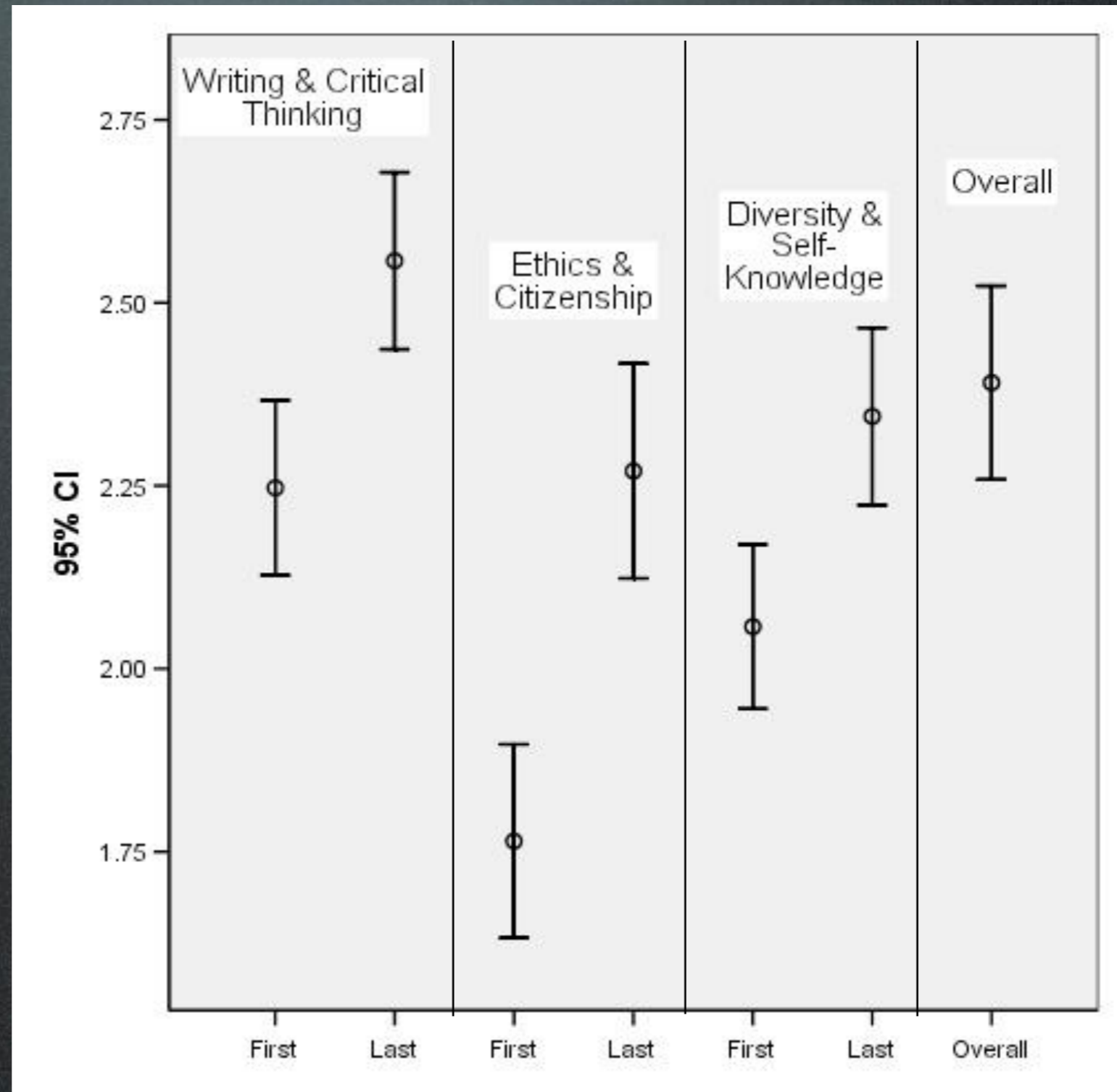
The four guiding questions for use in framing discussions, assignments and activities throughout the course:

- What defines an individual; how is individual identity formed?
- What defines community; how is community identity formed?
- How do individuals deal with conflicts between their personal interests and the interests of the community?
- How do diversity and difference affect the individual and the community?

QU 101 Fall 2005

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Mean Scores



QU 101 Fall 2005

CHANGES MADE AFTER ASSESSMENT
NEW EARLY COMMON ASSIGNMENT FOR FALL 2006

Changed summer reading assignment to James McBride, *The Color of Water* for Fall 2006 and changed assignments.

In The Color of Water, James McBride explores questions about his own identity in communities through reflections about important moments growing up, interviews with his mother and interviews with community members from her past. In Amin Maalouf's In the Name of Identity, we are introduced to specific concepts (or a theory) for analyzing conflicting identities.

With these readings as background, think about your own experiences growing up in communities of many types, ranging from nuclear to extended families to broader cultural and social communities like your schools and home towns, and write an essay that has the following components:

QU 101 Fall 2005

CHANGES MADE AFTER ASSESSMENT EARLY COMMON ASSIGNMENT FOR FALL 2006

1. Based on your thinking about your experience, make an argument that explains how you understand the development of your identity and in which you use a personal narrative and your reflection on it as evidence to support your argument. Your essay's evidence would describe one or more significant individuals, events, experiences or situations in communities that contributed in important ways to your understanding of yourself in relation to others.
2. Your essay should also analyze and explain the development of your identity: How do the individual(s) and event(s) you describe demonstrate an important aspect or aspects of your identity in community (or communities). Specifically, *why* are these individual(s) and event(s) evidence of the ways in which you understand yourself? Did you change as a result of the experience(s) you describe? As part of your argument, use concepts from McBride and Maalouf to analyze your experience; and/or in contrast with your experience.

QU 101 Fall 2005

CHANGES MADE AFTER ASSESSMENT NEW LATE COMMON ASSIGNMENT

In your final formal writing assignment, you will again make an argument that analyzes and explains how you understand the development of your identity, this time using QU101 course material such as readings, discussions, lectures and films, along with course concepts and your experiences at QU more generally.

Standing *outside of yourself*, look back at the first essay you wrote for QU101, and at the person you are today, after a semester at Quinnipiac; write an essay describing the path you have traveled: what were the most interesting landmarks for you as an individual in community along the way of your journey? As you describe your landmarks, consider what made them important, and how they affected where you are today. Has your understanding of your *identity* changed in any way? How do you see the individual you are today in relation to *community*? Consider the four course questions in QU101 and how some or all of them might contribute to a deeper understanding of your journey [1].

As you write your essay, make reference to material, concepts and insights from your experiences in QU101 as evidence to support your argument. Stronger essays will also take into account evidence that challenges the main argument.

QU 201 Spring 2007

ONGOING ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Common Late Assignment:

The underlying theme of the University Seminar series (QU101, QU201, QU301) is *community*. This semester, in QU201, we have been investigating aspects of national community – specifically as they are related to and influenced by [[seminar topic here](#)].

Construct a paper in which you advance a claim (or argument) about national community; support your claim by making reference to the materials and ideas we have examined in QU201 this semester. As you think through and construct your ideas, be sure to situate them clearly within the context of the course questions and goals listed on the syllabus:

QU 201 Spring 2007

ONGOING ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Common Course Questions:

- How does the definition of community that you developed in QU 101 impact or relate to the definition when we consider "our national community"? What would you identify as the defining traits of "community" in light of your readings, discussions, and experiences in QU 101 and QU 201?
- How does individualism as a cultural value create roadblocks and opportunities in the building of this nation?
- To what extent can a nation be a community?

Individual Seminar Questions:

[add individual seminar questions as well, as a separate category– perhaps in bulleted form].

The paper should be 8 – 10 pages long, and should cite/reference properly the materials you use in supporting your claims *[additional requirements can also be listed here in terms of style, format, etc. – if any]...*

QU 201 Spring 2007

ONGOING ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Review of sample QU 201 papers

- Is the common prompt being used consistently?
- Papers will prove useful in engaging QU 201 faculty in developing the QU 201 rubrics.
- We envision starting with the same rubric categories of writing and critical thinking, ethics and citizenship, and diversity and self –knowledge.
- Working with QU201 faculty will also help in standardizing expectations.

QU 201 Spring 2007

CHANGES MADE SO FAR FOR NEXT YEAR

New Common Course Questions:

- 1. What does community mean in a national context?
- 2. What effect does the cultural value of individualism have on our concepts of national community and citizenship?
- 3. What effect does our pluralistic and multicultural heritage have on our concepts of national community and citizenship?

RUBRIC DETAILS

WRITING AND CRITICAL THINKING

Writing and Critical Thinking (adapted from AP Essay Scoring Rubric)

How well does the student deal with the questions about identity and human nature given in the specific assignment?

Expert ←

→ Novice

4 - Superior

These are superior essays. They have a clear statement of position, thoughtful support, convincing examples, and stylistic maturity (sentence structure, diction, organization). Although there may be a few grammar or spelling errors, the author demonstrates a superior control of language.

3 - Good

These are good to excellent essays, but they have a thesis which lacks the specific and convincing proof of the superior essays. The author's writing style is less mature, and thus has occasional lapses of diction, tone, syntax, or organization. Although there may be errors of grammar and spelling, the author demonstrates an adequate control of language.

2 - Adequate, but mediocre

These are mediocre, but adequate, essays. The thesis may not be quite clear, the argument not as well-developed, and the organization not especially effective. There are some grammar and spelling errors. Any of the following require a score no higher than 2: oversimplification or overgeneralization; write only in general terms, ignoring fine distinctions; fail to discuss the issue completely or satisfactorily; mismanage the evidence; contain insufficient details; treat only one aspect of a two-sided issue; cite examples but fail to consider the consequences.

1 - Weak

These are weak essays. They lack clear organization and adequate support, the writing style is simplistic, and there are frequent grammar and spelling errors.

0 - Unsatisfactory

These are poor essays. Although they may mention the question, they lack clarity, have little or no evidence, and contain consistent grammar and spelling errors. They are badly written, or unacceptably brief.

RUBRIC DETAILS

ETHICS AND CITIZENSHIP

Ethics and Citizenship Description

Students dealing with ethical and citizenship issues explore concepts such as justice, idealism, a fundamental concern for the welfare of others, absolute or universal ethical rules, and relativistic, situational and/or subjective perspectives. We are looking for evidence that the student is dealing with the complexities of ethical decision making rather than for specific ethical values or perspectives. (Adapted from abstract of Forsyth, D. (1980). A taxonomy of ethical ideologies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 39(1), pp. 175-184.) Students dealing with citizenship and ethical issues also explore concepts such as social contracts, individual and collective responsibilities in social contexts, identifying and resolving conflicts between individual and collective interests, and exploring the consequences of such conflicts and of conflict resolution.

Ethics & Citizenship

Scoring Guide

Expert ←				→	Novice
4 - Superior	3 - Good	2 - Adequate, but mediocre	1 - Weak	0 - Unsatisfactory	
Makes a coherent ethical argument central to the thesis of the paper. Shows an understanding and appreciation of multiple ethical perspectives. Applies the ethical standard in a way that shows an understanding of the individual's role as a citizen in community. Explores in more depth the consequences of conflicts and of conflict resolutions, and their continuing impact on individuals and community.	More complex... exhibits all the attributes of score 2, and also recognizes ethical standards in relation to individual roles played as a citizen in community. Acknowledges other ethical perspectives. Acknowledges that conflicts and resolutions have continuing impact on individuals and community.	Some evidence of ethical discrimination and judgment in social contexts, and at least an implicit appeal to an ethical standard, and/or some awareness of roles of a citizen in community.	Simplistic or accidental evidence of ethical thinking and/or of thinking about citizenship.	No evidence of ethical thinking or of thinking about citizenship.	

University Curriculum

DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENT

The Scientific Tradition

The Humanities

The Social Sciences

The Fine Arts

We are currently reviewing existing and new courses for certification to satisfy distribution requirements. Course proposals must include learning outcomes consistent with those adopted by the Faculty Senate for the tradition, and proposals must also include plans for assessing learning outcomes. To maintain certification for the distribution requirement, assessment results must be presented to the University Curriculum Committee every 3 – 4 years.