

Exploring Disciplinary and Subject Area Grounding:
**What, Exactly, Are Students
Integrating?**

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What We Learned from Washington

- Good integrative interdisciplinary assignments proceed from a deep and clearly articulated understanding of the **disciplines** involved
- Assignments should have a clear **purpose** that (1) addresses a relevant public problem and (2) benefits from disciplinary insights
- Interdisciplinary \neq **Integrative**

Which Disciplines Are Represented Here Today?

English	
Counseling	
Art	
Philosophy	
Psychology	
Biology	
Speech	
Math	
Foreign Languages	

A note on interdisciplinary and integrative understanding

Common sense
integration/synthesis

Interdisciplinary
integration



Common Sense Integrations



Integrating information
(e.g., news, facts)

Integrating perspectives
(e.g. self, neighbor, daughter)

Integrating languages
(e.g. make picture or a skit)

Integrating experiences
(e.g. tell life-story)

Integrative Interdisciplinary **Understanding**

Individuals bring insights from different disciplines together to produce new, deeper, broader, more nuanced or effective comprehension of the issue examined.

Interdisciplinary Integrations

Integrating knowledge and modes of thinking in two or more disciplines to advance understanding

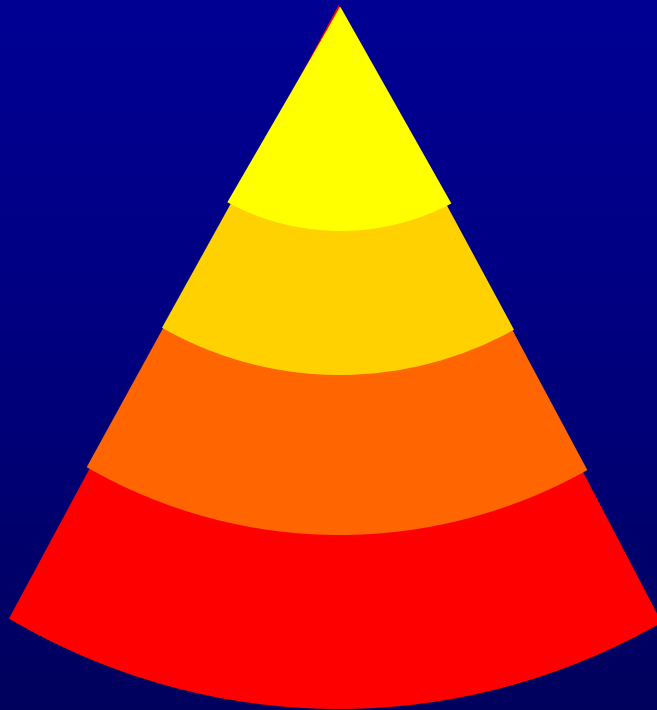
Integrating *expert* perspectives
(e.g. M. Gandhi, J. Sachs, Liberation Theology on poverty)

Integrating *artistic* modalities
(e.g., history and sculpture in monument)

Integrating *disciplines* to understand experience
(e.g., life-story placed in the larger sociological, historical, economic context)



Dimensions of Disciplinary Understanding



PURPOSES

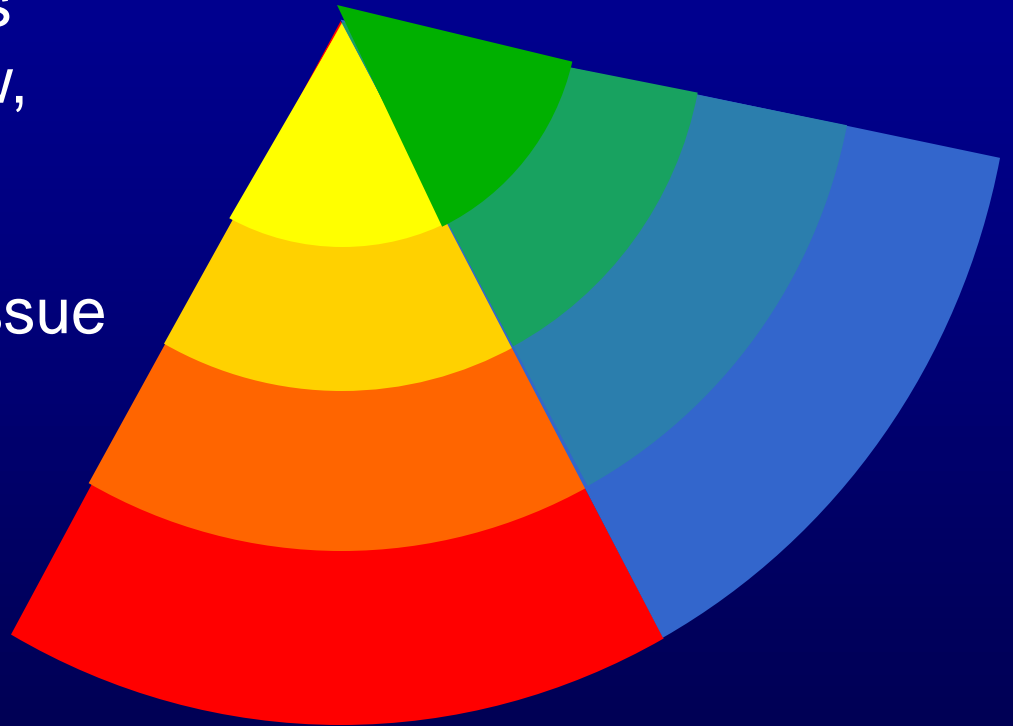
METHODS

KNOWLEDGE

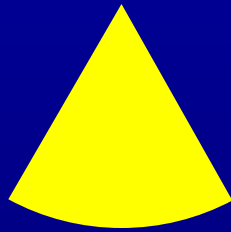
FORMS

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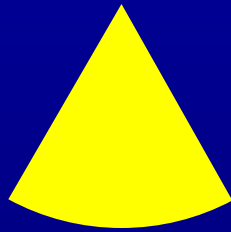
Purposes of a Discipline



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- Possible uses of this kind of knowledge
- What does this kind of inquiry afford?

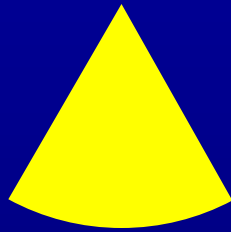
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 - *Identify continuity and change over time*
 - *Define and justify the nation*

Purposes of a Discipline



- Possible uses of this kind of knowledge
- What does this kind of inquiry afford?
- E.G. History:
 - *Identify continuity and change over time*
 - *Define and justify the nation*
- Communication:
 - *Look at and understand messages and perspectives*
 - *Train students to synthesize information, recognize perspectives, and present convincing arguments*
 - *Understand how meaning is generated through communicative acts.*
 - *To actively participate in the democratic process*
 - *To make change happen*
 - *To build relationships.*
 - *To effectively express oneself*

Methods Used by a Discipline



METHODS

- How does one build and validate knowledge in this discipline?

Methods Used by a Discipline



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 - *Analyze documentary evidence from multiple perspectives*
 - *Construct narratives to explain cause and effect*

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- **E.G. History**
 - *Analyze documentary evidence from multiple perspectives*
 - *Construct narratives to explain cause and effect*
- **Communication**
 - *Qualitative: ethnography, interviews, analyses of texts and recorded speech acts*
 - *Quantitative: questionnaires, surveys*
 - *Generate and validate theories and models of communication.*
 - *Synthesize and utilize numerous social behavioral theories (e.g., psychology, sociology, etc.)*

Knowledge Produced by a Discipline



KNOWLEDGE

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- **E.G. History**
 - *Conflict over slavery led to the Civil War*
 - *Paid labor and increased control over reproduction caused women to demand equal rights*
- **Communication**
 - *Everything is symbolic; meaning is separate from the symbol*
 - *Meaning manifests through acts*
 - *Perception plays a role in how we understand and produce messages*
 - *Messages must take into account audience.*
 - *Messages are bound by context and perspective.*
 - *Communication is verbal and non-verbal.*

Forms Deployed by a Discipline



FORMS

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- E.G. History
 - *Monographs, journal articles, conference papers*
 - *Archives*
 - *Documentary films*
 - *Museum displays*

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- **E.G. History**
 - *Monographs, journal articles, conference papers*
 - *Archives*
 - *Documentary films*
 - *Museum displays*
- **Communication**
 - *Oral performances (literary interpretation, debate, etc.)*
 - *Consulting, training, coaching, facilitation*
 - *Monographs, journal articles, conference papers*

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