

1. Title of Project
Critical Thinking in ENG 271, “Technical Communication”
2. Purpose
The purpose of my IPESL project was to redesign ENG 271, “Technical Communication,” to foster critical thinking in the context of writing tasks.
3. Results
It is too early to be able to assess results since I just implemented the course redesign at the beginning of the fall 2007 semester. At present, I have administered a critical thinking/writing pre-test, but will not have results until I administer a post-test at the end of the semester.
4. Issues
The major issue that arose in the course of this project was that of assessment – specifically, the challenge of creating a valid tool. There is no literature in my field related to critical thinking assessment; colleagues at other institutions have assessed different aspects of critical thinking or have used different rubrics; and the IPESL initiative did not specifically address assessment in terms of subscribing to a standardized assessment tool or advising participants on the challenges of creating valid assessments. I hope that the two instruments I have developed will prove to be valid but I will not know this until after analyzing the data I collect.
5. Dissemination
A happy byproduct of working through the challenge of assessment is that I have been able to engage in e-mail conversations with colleagues at other institutions about their work in critical thinking. To that end, I can foresee the possibility of presenting critical thinking-related material with them at a future Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW) conference. More locally, my course materials are also available on my Web site and via the ATTW Web site.