Alternatives to the Term Paper: Designing Short, Low-Cost Writing Assignments that Promote Inquiry, Deep Learning, and Critical Thinking in the Classroom

John C. Bean, Seattle University
Friday, September 13
8:30—11:30 a.m.
Room 50 Milton Hall

When asked to confront interesting and engaging problems, students come alive in the classroom. This interactive workshop focuses on ways to design short, problem-based writing assignments that will help students learn important concepts in your courses as well as skills of critical reading, analysis, and argument that are central to your discipline. The workshop will suggest a variety of ways for incorporating these assignments into your syllabus: as informal thinking pieces, as short formal assignments, or as tasks for small group problem-solving. We’ll also discuss low-cost ways of grading student performance and handling the paper load. Participants should leave the workshop with hands-on ideas that can be immediately applied in the classroom setting.

John C. Bean (BA, Stanford; PhD University of Washington) is a professor of English at Seattle University, where he holds the title of Consulting Professor for Writing and Assessment. He is the author of Engaging Ideas: The Professor’s Guide to Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom, 2nd edition (Jossey-Bass, 2011). He is also the co-author of three widely-used composition textbooks. Since 2003 he has researched and written on the development of institutional assessment strategies that promote faculty conversations about teaching, learning, and curriculum design.