Courses in the linkages:
Three linkages were established for the linked courses pilot which took place in Fall 2012, with two courses in each: two sections of GSW 1110 were linked with sections of BA 1500, and one section of GSW 1110 was linked with a section of Philosophy 1020. In all three cases, the linkages were comprised of exactly the same students.

How the linkages functioned:
• Linked faculty cohort met for an orientation session with cohort facilitators (Nelson-Beene, Fink, Klopfer) during Finals Week in Spring 2012—and met once a month with the facilitators throughout the fall semester.
• Linked faculty shared syllabi and collaborated throughout the summer and fall semester regarding their linkage.
• Course syllabi contained an explanation about the linkage, which was collaboratively written by the faculty.
• One or two—but not all—assignments connected in some way. Class activities connected in multiple ways.
• Faculty worked with connections between the disciplines to the degree possible. In the GSW and Philosophy linkage, for example, students were taught about academic argumentation—with faculty emphasizing differences between disciplinary approaches to academic argumentation. As well, the faculty participated in one another’s class sessions during instruction about argumentation.

Assessment
In addition to the collection of anecdotal information, assessment of the pilot was accomplished through the use of pre- and post-surveys of the students, frequent written reflections from the faculty, and information provided by students on student evaluations and in end-of-term reflections.

Results:
The faculty cohort and the linked courses facilitators concur that the linked courses pilot—although certainly too small for results to be conclusive—was highly successful:

• GSW students in the linkage developed stronger writing and higher pass rates compared to those in non-linked sections. One faculty member believed that this can be attributed to a higher level of accountability in the linked sections. The faculty member teaching the two BA 1500 sections also reported higher grades.
• Faculty reported that students frequently gave one another reminders about what was due in their “other” linked course.
• A peer facilitator reported feeling “less needed” in the linked courses than in non-linked courses, since the linked courses students formed a Facebook group for the purpose of helping one another, asking questions, etc. (Note: The faculty members were not involved in the creation of the Facebook site and did not join it.)
• Students reported that they established friendships with classmates more readily in the linked courses compared to other courses.
• Students reported that the linked faculty got to know them better than their non-linked faculty had. (Note: the section size was 22 students, probably smaller than the non-linked sections, which would contribute to this perception.)
• The instructor of BA 1500 reported that 83% of students had submitted all homework assignments in the past, while 87% in the linked sections did so. GSW instructors reported that nearly all students submitted all assignments. All faculty in the pilot reported an unusually high and timely rate of assignment completion.
• Attendance in the linked sections was far better than is typical.
• Faculty believed that a positive peer pressure developed in these sections— including concern for and reaching out to any students who were absent.
• Faculty sensed that students in the linked sections were noticeably more comfortable with making presentations to their peers.
• Many students in the pilot registered to be in the same GSW sections for the spring semester.
• Students reported that they would have liked an even greater degree of curricular linkage between the two courses.

Problems noted:
• Faculty noted that in some cases students became a bit “cliquey” by the semester’s end. No additional difficulties were reported.