Questions for Writing in the Disciplines

Purpose
- Why do people write in your field? That is, what is the purpose or function of writing in your field? (Is it to provide critiques, summaries, analysis, new ideas, new interpretations, empirical data, etc.? )
- What kinds of questions are writers in your field trying to answer with their writing?

Genres
- What are the most appropriate or the most common genres of writing one would encounter in this particular field?

Form
- What is the format or organization of a typical article?
- Does your field usually use a particular citation style (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.)? How is the appropriate citation style determined? Do you know why that particular citation style is used?

Argument
- How is an argument (or thesis, or main claim, or main idea) usually introduced in writing in your field?
- How is that argument usually developed?
- What is the role of other scholarship and research in writing in your field? How and to what degree should previous scholarship be introduced and/or discussed in writing?
- How would one address conflicting theories or arguments? (Address them, ignore them, disprove them, make slight mention of them?)

Evidence/research
- What kind of evidence or research is used in your field? What kind of research, data or examples do you analyze?
- How is evidence, research, or data used in writing in your field?

Voice
- Is there a typical “voice” in writing in your field—formal, informal, personal, dispassionate, etc.?
- Would a writer ever make use of the first person when writing in this field?
- What is the degree of personal investment, personal experience in the writing of a given piece in this field? How is that manifest (if not through the use of first person, maybe through the narration of personal experiences)?

Other
- Are there any other characteristics or qualities of writing that seem typical of your field?

For students
- What do you want a student to do and to learn when you ask them to write in your field?
- As they prepare to write, what questions should students ask themselves about the topic, their research, etc.?
- What difficulties did you first encounter when writing in this field? How did you overcome these obstacles, and how do you advise students to avoid similar problems?