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Principles and Pragmatics in Hard Times

Josna Rege

All three of the essays in this issue, each in its very different way, focus on the goal of greater student engagement in the classroom. In “The Challenge of Asking Engaging Questions,” Nathan Dickman asserts that “a proper goal of asking questions in the classroom is not to get students to answer them, but *to get students to ask them with us.*” He seeks the kind of classroom pedagogy that is a shared quest for knowledge on the part of both teacher and students, through asking higher-order questions that elicit further inquiry rather than closed questions that are merely veiled commands. As Dickman observes, “While dogs and gods can ‘bark orders,’ asking questions appears to be a uniquely human activity.”

In “Electric Engagement,” David Marlow, Pamela Wash, Jeannie Chapman, and Timothy Dale explore the possibilities for greater student engagement through the use of classroom response technology, or clickers, in four different disciplines, as each experiments with clickers to spark student interest, class discussion, higher-order thinking, and a greater understanding of basic concepts. The authors are not wedded to the technology as such—as they say, “Great teaching is possible with chalk and a blackboard, just as painfully inept teaching is possible with the most elaborate technological tools”—but they are keen to explore creative and effective uses of this technology across disciplines.

John Pruitt, the author of our third essay, extends the goal of inclusion to heterosexual white males, who may be in danger of becoming alienated in the multicultural classroom, an environment that ought to benefit all students. In “Accommodating the Diversity Needs of Heterosexual White Male Students (You Must be Joking!),” Pruitt uses the critical analysis of short poems in focus groups to elicit straight white male students’ responses to topics on which they might normally remain silent in more mixed company. Their discussions produce insights into these students’ perspectives and vulnerabilities that invite further reflection and research.

Like Pruitt’s essay, our first teaching report in this issue, Sara Schotland’s “Justice for Undergraduates,” seeks to stimulate discussions of social justice through literary texts. Schotland, who is both a professor and a practicing attorney, describes how her law and literature course allows her to introduce

such topics as capital punishment, “invisible victims,” and complex ethical choices into the liberal arts classroom

In these times, principles and pragmatism must of necessity go hand-in-hand. In our second teaching report, “Connecting Communication Theory to Interviewing Practice,” Lauren Mackenzie describes how she teaches interpersonal communication and simultaneously prepares students for future job searches, offering interviewing skills for students, usable assignments for teachers, and opportunities for productive teacher-student interaction.

As survival skills are becoming part of pedagogy at the classroom level, so too are they at the institutional level. In this issue of *Currents* we introduce a new section, Program Reports. We have noted that an increasing number of our submissions are addressing the design and development of academic programs. While it seemed to us at first that these pieces were inappropriate for a journal focusing on improving teaching and learning in the classroom, we have come to believe that in many cases, better classroom practices can emerge from a programmatic approach to the material and that in all cases, there can be no class if there is no longer a program. In times of belt-tightening when many programs are threatened, particularly in the humanities, it becomes a necessity for us as teachers to consider questions of recruitment and retention and the pragmatics of marketing our disciplines. In our first offering in this new section, “*La Nouvelle Cuisine Française: A Case Study in Active Program-Building*” Kirsten Halling and Marie Hertzler offer their own tested recipes for program success in a report that will be of broad interest and applicability.

The Book Reviews section carries on the dual focus on economics and the mechanics of the classroom. In “Higher Education’s Hidden Economy,” Kim Emery reviews Mark Bousquet’s *How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation*, and

in “Small-Group Pedagogy,” Mark Wagner reviews *Team-Based Learning: A Transformative Use of Small Groups in College Teaching*, edited by Larry Michaelsen et al., considering the economic and pedagogical implications of institutional restructuring and classroom structures, respectively.

Welcome and thanks to Brian Burgess, our new editorial assistant, who is making things possible on a daily basis and has taken over the compilation of our regular Current Clips and Links section. As we enter our second year of publication with our hard-working and visionary founding advisory board, we are preparing to constitute our external advisory board. Please let us know if you are interested in working with *Currents* in this capacity. Thanks to our contributors for bearing with us over the summer and into the fall as we struggled through the correspondence that had piled up while we were functioning without an editorial assistant. Now that we are receiving many more submissions, we are in need of more readers who would be willing to review one submission per issue, so please write to us with your areas of interest and expertise if you are interested in serving as a regular referee.

Not much is free anymore, but you can still subscribe to *Currents* completely free of charge by clicking on the subscription link on our homepage. We are thankful for our own survival in these hard times and welcome your continued input and participation in our collaborative venture. ■■

The Challenge of Asking Engaging Questions

Nathan Eric Dickman

Abstract

This paper¹ explores the uses of questions in the classroom, and isolates a unique kind of question, the “question-eliciting-question” (or QEQ), that poses a challenge for instructors leading classroom discussions. Statistics show that teachers spend large portions of their instructional time asking questions. While pedagogical theory promotes the use of “higher-order” questions because they purportedly promote complex and critical thinking, the questions instructors ask in practice inadequately fulfill this goal. Part of the problem is the way we have come to think about questions and the normative uses we make of them. They are essentially, as a major school of philosophy of language claims, commands. Commands demand mere answers. QEQs, however, are not something to be answered, but we ask and share with one another.

Keywords

classroom discussion, creation of knowledge, dialogue, motivating interest, question-asking

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Introduction

While dogs and gods can “bark orders,” asking questions appears to be a uniquely human activity. Questioning is the crucial marker that distinguishes the contemporary discussion classroom from the traditional lecture course. Ideally, questions ought to stimulate students’ interest, guide their thinking, and cultivate a questioning disposition in them (Cotton, 1988; Berci and Griffith, 2005; Myhill and Dunkin, 2005; International Center for Leadership in Education, 2001-2006). However, research has shown that, in practice, questions in the classroom rarely live up to these ideals for numerous reasons, such as time constraints, authoritarian teaching styles, and student insecurities (Dillon, 1978; Levin and Long, 1981; Piazza, 2001; de Jesus et al., 2004; Wells and Arauz, 2006). Perhaps, as some postmodern philosophers have noted, there is something insidious about questions, in that they seem to be inherently totalitarian (Žižek, 1989; Fiumara, 1995). Given the conceptualization

1 I want to thank the two anonymous reviewers of a draft of this paper for their critically constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement.

of questions as essentially commands by 20th century Anglo-American philosophers of language (see Åqvist, 1965; Hintikka, 1976; Searle, 1969, 1979; Bell, 1975), this suspicion about questions might not be misguided. In every case, it seems, interrogatives—such as “What is your name?”—are reducible to imperatives—such as “Tell me your name.” However, conceiving of questions with more attention to the inner working of reaching an understanding with others reveals that some questions cannot be so reduced to commands (Coltman, 1998; Gadamer, 2004). As we will see, some questions are not acts by which we try to command another person to answer us, but acts by which we try to get another person to share our questions.

A number of recent projects in curriculum development and design, focusing on discussion practices in particular, promote the strategic use of questions in the classroom (Wiggins & McTighe, 2001; Morgan & Saxton, 2006). What these relatively recent projects neglect to stress, however, is that the fundamental point of some questions is to get another person to ask them with us, to share them. The goal of asking such questions in the classroom, in other words, is to get students to *ask* them, not answer them. The challenge is, can instructors allow themselves to be so vulnerable as to ask genuine questions before student audiences? Moreover, can instruction be given to students on how to perform genuine inquiry? Is it by asking students questions that educators might cultivate a disposition of inquiry? We need more studies such as Drake’s (1998), in which she explores numerous integrated curricula centered on student question-asking, and more suggestions like those of Morgan & Saxton (2006) about how to teach students to ask better questions. However, rather than focusing on the acquisition of the skill of questioning—which reduces it to a technology that can be automated—my proposal is that we need to focus on ways of eliciting student passion for questioning

and nurture the sense of genuine inquiry they already possess.

In what follows, I seek to isolate and develop a specific kind of question, what I will here call the “Question-Eliciting Question” (QEQ). What makes this kind of question unique is that rather than aiming—as most questions do—at an answer, either in the form of a direct answer or in the form of an action that satisfies the request, the QEQ is instead aimed at its joint asking, that is, where two or more participants in conversation come under its provocative power by asking it together. A QEQ is meant to be shared, not answered. It is not that such questions provoke more and different questions from our students—however important this is as well—but that the same questions are asked by both participants in the conversation. However, before turning to QEQs, I want to establish that there is a need for them in the classroom, first by way of a general examination of pedagogical reflections on the ideal functions of questions in college classrooms, and second by way of a general survey of the actual deployment of question strategies in the classroom. In what follows, I do not intend to provide a taxonomy of question kinds, because such taxonomies are quite abundant in pedagogical literature; instead, I seek to call into question the interest in doing so as well as the normative taxonomies promoted in pedagogical manuals.

I. The Ideal Purpose of Questioning in the Classroom and the Myth of “Open” Questions

One ideal goal of liberal arts education is to cultivate learners into responsible and knowledgeable global citizens “of the 21st century and empower them to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world” (see, for instance, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, The University of Iowa, 2006). A recurrent addendum to this specific ideal is to instill in students a passion for lifelong learning (see, for example, the Office of Public

Relations, McMaster University, 2009).² The primary marker that distinguishes today's classroom prioritizing discussion and the generation of "knowledgeable global citizens" from traditional classrooms prioritizing lecture and the transmission of information is educators asking questions. Since Romiett Stevens's claim in 1912 that an educator's use of questions is the basis upon which one ought to measure her effectiveness, questions have been among the most discussed and prescribed strategies for fostering student learning. Questioning is, ideally, "at the heart of teaching and learning" (Berci & Griffith, 2005).

Questions are said to play numerous roles in the classroom, from stimulating student thought to assessing student knowledge. Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives forms the basis—explicitly or implicitly—upon which many educators classify their questions (1965). They are often reduced to two basic kinds of questions: those requiring lower-order thinking skills and those requiring higher-order thinking skills. As Kathleen Cotton defines them,

Lower cognitive questions are those which ask the student merely to recall...[and] are also referred to in the literature as fact, closed, recall, and knowledge questions. Higher cognitive questions are defined as those which ask the student to mentally manipulate bits of information previously learned to create an answer or to support an answer with logically reasoned evidence...[and] are also called open-ended, interpretive, evaluative, inquiry, inferential, and synthesis questions. (Cotton, 1988)

This reduction of questions to opposing kinds is not helpful as a guide to determining what questions a professor ought to ask of her students in order to generate

engagement from them. Moreover, the descriptions of lower cognitive and higher cognitive questions do not appear to correspond to the grammatical distinction between "closed" and "open" questions. A brief detour through the grammar of questions raises the issue of whether open-ended or higher-order questions are mere myth.

Grammatically "open" questions, or what are also referred to as "wh-questions" (see Kearsley, 1976), are formed with any interrogative word—who, whom, whose, what, which, when, where, how, or why (see Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973; and Leech & Svartvik, 1975). Answering these questions consists merely in determining the interrogative variable, such as the "where" in the question, "Where are my car keys?" There are two major categories of "closed" questions: "yes-no questions" and "alternative questions." Yes-no questions admit only affirmative or negative response. Alternative questions explicitly or implicitly specify a disjunction or a fixed set of more than two alternatives. Answering these questions consists of the mere selection of one of the alternatives.

Yes-no questions and disjunctive alternative questions are "limited" in that they allow for only two answers or a larger specified set of answers. Hence their being labeled "closed" questions. Wh-questions, on the other hand, are "unlimited" in that any number of answers can be given as long as they provide the details required by the interrogative word or clause (Leech & Svartvik, 1975). Hence they are labeled "open" questions. That a question is grammatically "open" does not mean, however, that the question is somehow more stimulating and engaging. We can think about the questions this way: grammatically closed questions are reducible to "true/false" or "multiple choice" problems, whereas grammatically open questions are reducible to "fill-in the blank" or "short answer" problems. That an "open" question calls for higher cognitive processes appears to be mere myth.

2 While I have no particular reasons to select Iowa and McMaster from among other institutions of higher learning, what I seek to illustrate with these two more or less random references is that these lofty goals constitute part of the public face that academia shares with society at large.

Despite these grammatical facts, a belief persists in pedagogical literature about the purported evocative power of higher-order or open questions. Because higher-order thinking skills are target learning outcomes of standards-based education reform, most state and district standards emphasize and promote questions that are assumed to evoke higher-order thinking (see Iowa Department of Education, 2008). The International Center for Leadership in Education, for example, prescribes higher-order questions because they are thought to have a greater potential to create learning conversations (2001-2006). Higher-order questions are promoted as a powerful tool in the hands of educators, in that they are thought to help instructors to stimulate student interest and motivate students to get actively involved, to cultivate critical thinking skills and inquiring attitudes in students, to nurture student insights by exposing relationships, and to stimulate independent pursuit of knowledge in students (Cotton, 1988). It seems that something as simple as a mere question is capable of doing quite amazing things! This does seem intuitive, however. Some questions do appear capable of eliciting thoughtful and responsible engagement from students. But it is not possible to isolate such questions by means of the binary distinction between “lower” and “higher” cognitive questions, or “closed” and “open” questions. This can be made plain by turning to research on the ways questions are actually used in the classroom.

II. *The Practices of Questioning in the Classroom*

In the classroom,³ instructors ask more than three hundred questions per day (or seven hours of classroom time), with an average wait-time after a

question of one second or less (Levin & Long, 1981; Fisher, 2005). This makes up somewhere between 35% and 50% of their total instructional time (Cotton, 1988). A typical discussion session with the whole class consists of the instructor’s initial question, one or more student responses, and the instructor’s feedback to the responses. This is commonly referred to as the “initiation-response-feedback” (IRF) sequence (Myhill & Dunkin, 2005; and Wells & Meijia, 2006). Approximately 60% of teacher questions, however, are said to be lower-order, whereas 20% are higher-order and the other 20% consists of procedural day-to-day questions (Cotton, 1988). Despite the prioritization of higher-order questions in theory, teachers actually ask a disproportionate number of lower-order questions (Myhill & Dunkin, 2005; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). This suggests that despite the prioritization of higher-order thinking skills, classroom practices fall short of fulfilling this goal.

Furthermore, learners often avoid asking their own questions. As Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe point out,

When merely learning answers is the goal, too often the instruction ironically precludes students from pursuing the questions that naturally arise in the unfolding of the work, leading to less engagement and less understanding. (Wiggins & McTighe, 2001, p. 32)

At the same time that teaching strategies using lower-order questions inhibit student questions, the social anxiety students have about fitting in contributes as well. Asking questions in the classroom simply gives many students feelings of exposure and vulnerability (de Jesus et al., 2007, p. 532).

While students ask few questions in the classroom, Authur C. Graesser and Brent A. Olde’s studies of college students in tutoring sessions have shown that they ask up to twenty-six questions during an hour of tutoring (2003, p. 525). The tutoring time often pro-

3 The following research spans the range from elementary to postsecondary education, and although the majority of the research was performed in elementary and secondary contexts, the findings are relevant to the present purpose of examining the role questions generally play in the college classroom.

vides students with a space not bound by the classroom structure of authoritarian teachers and peer pressures. While this appears promising, those same studies show that over 90% of all questions posed by students in tutoring sessions are shallow, on the very first level of Bloom's taxonomy. Only 8% of student questions span the other five levels (Graesser & Person, 1994, p. 131). The problem is not simply that students do not ask their own questions, but that even when they do ask questions, they seem to lack sufficient skills in formulating good questions.

Furthermore, while higher-order questions have an exalted place in standards-based education theory, research on the effects of higher-order questions is ambiguous at best (Dillon, 1978). Answers elicited by open-ended questions are typically no more extensive than those elicited by closed questions. Moreover, instructors frequently ask questions to which they already know the answer, such that they are for all practical purposes following a script (Myhill & Dunkin, 2005). They also often ask "conductive" questions, loaded with bias and conveying to students their preference for a specific answer (Piazza, 2002). Thus, within the scope of classroom questioning practices, education seems to aim at the linear transmission of information where teaching is prioritized over learning and dialogue.

Institutional pressures about time and performance, as well as social responsibilities to manage student behavior, depress pedagogical confidence and lead instructors to utilize questions primarily as a means of control (see Myhill & Dunkin, 2005; and Morgan & Saxton, 2006). One might go so far as to claim that most questioning in the classroom contributes to the *suppression* of student thought. As J. T. Dillon sums up the matter, "Teacher questions do not constitute requests for the information specified. It is not stimulating but *deadening* to supply information to someone who already has it" (1978, p. 59). Professors often punctuate their lectures with what we can refer to

here as "checking questions," where they solicit content from their student audiences as they proceed through the lecture. Many of us have often heard professors say, "And this is...?" In such an environment, students are neither taught to ask their own questions, nor are they motivated to be engaged, but instead are trained in the arts of answering and brevity.

Research on classroom questioning practices calls into question the dogma that questions are an effective teaching technique. It also calls into question the belief that the binary taxonomy of lower and higher-order questions result in different qualities of student performance. On the contrary, it seems that questioning contributes to the conditioning of students as passive reactors in such a way that it inhibits learning rather than fostering it. The use of questions in the classroom fits a typical bias many have about questions in general: questions are not merely about the acquisition and transmission of information, but more often than not—and especially in educational contexts, perhaps—are acts of power and control. Theories in the field of conversation and discourse analysis focus on question-answer sequences as exemplary of conversational processes (see Sacks et al. 1974; Stenström 1984; & Searle 1992). The basic claim is that questions more or less control what comes next in conversation: that the questioner controls not only the sequence of conversation but who will speak and in what form he will speak, namely, responding to the question (see Wang, 2006). Instructor-student exchange is no exception to this norm, and in fact is paradigmatic of it. In the classroom environment the student must respect and answer the instructor's question, especially in the case of exams. This way of thinking about questions, however, runs counter the lofty ideals in pedagogical literature. If students must answer the questions put to them by instructors, where did the aim of fostering student inquiry go? Perhaps this has something to do with the nature of questions as such or at least the way in which

we have come to think about them. This sense of questioning as a means of control is developed explicitly in recent philosophies of language.

III. Principles of Questioning as Such

Questioning in general has received a bad reputation in the last decades, and questioning in the classroom has done little to help us think otherwise about it. Consider, for instance, Slavoj Žižek's disparaging remark that questioning is "the basic procedure of the totalitarian intersubjective relationship... Totalitarian power is not a dogmatism which has all the answers; it is, on the contrary, the instance which has all the questions" (1989, p. 179). Consider as well Gemma Corradi Fiumara's claim that questioning "so heavily predetermines the reply that it may conceal those disturbing features, or anomalies, that might instead reveal something more enlightening than the question itself—if the question did not make them inaudible" (2003, p. 137). Their critiques converge on a similar point: questioning is the prerogative of those with epistemic and political privilege (Žižek, 1989, pp. 178-182; Fiumara, 2003, pp. 133-148). If we turn to Speech Act Theory, a dominant school of reflection on language (and questioning in particular) in 20th century Anglo-American philosophy, these criticisms do not appear misguided because, as we will see, questions are from this perspective essentially a species of commands. The power of this theory is that it makes explicit what many of us intuitively sense about questions in general. A brief excursion into Speech Act Theory will help clarify the usual "point" of questions as well as provide a contrast to my own development of QEQs. What's the point of asking a question? For Speech Act Theory, the point is to "command" an answer (Bell, 1975). If this is true, then there seems to be little reason to use questions in the classroom at all, or at least for the purpose of stimulating student engagement.

John Searle, a leading representative of Speech Act Theory, claims that there are five basic things

speakers can do with language: assert, direct (command), commit, express, and declare. In Searle's words,

There are five general ways of using language, five general categories of illocutionary acts. We tell people how things are (Assertives), we try to get people to do things (Directives), we commit ourselves to doing things (Commissives), we express our feelings and attitudes (Expressives), and we bring about changes in the world through our utterances (Declarations). (1979, p. viii)

Speech act theorists such as Searle use the phrase "illocutionary act" to underscore the *uses* we make of language rather than the meanings we refer to with words. At issue, then, for the speech-act theorist, is what we use questions for: to assert, to direct, to commit, to express, or to declare?

The categories of "assertives," "directives," and so forth, or "speech acts" in general, are based on varying coordination of four universal conditions, what Searle calls the propositional, preparatory, sincerity, and essential rules (Searle, 1969, pp. 66-67; see also Searle, 1979, pp. 2-8). The production of a speech act, such as a question, is governed by these constitutive rules, and they allow us to recognize whether an utterance is the realization of a particular use of language. An utterance is a question, according to Searle, only if the following conditions are met: a) no limits are set to its propositional content; b) the questioner must not know the answer and not believe that the other person will provide it without being asked; c) the questioner must want the requested information; and d) the questioner must attempt to get the information via the utterance (1969).

Searle claims that questions belong to the class of "directives," as they are requests for the performance of more speech acts in which the form of proper response is prescribed already by the question (1979, p. 14; 1992, p. 8). As Searle writes, "Questions are a subclass of directives, since they are attempts by [the speaker]

to get [the hearer] to answer, i.e. to perform a speech act" (1979, p. 14). For example, the typical interrogative "What is your name?" is conveniently transposable into the imperative "Tell me your name." As long as this command meets all four conditions cited above, then this command counts as a question. The point of a question is to get another person to speak within the constraints set out by the question and provide us with the appropriate information.

If the speech act analysis of questions is basically correct, then it seems that the criticisms of Žižek and Fiumara are apt, especially in the case of classroom questions, because questions posed by professors are rarely authentic and are, for the most part, commands. Yet, QEQs do not belong within this category of "directives" because they are not, essentially, commands for another person to answer. Instead, the point of asking a QEQ is to share it with another person. It is not to get an answer, but to wonder, to think within it and from it. Such a question is an achievement, not a problem to be solved or command to be fulfilled. A number of distinguishing features of QEQs can be brought out by way of the insights of the preeminent philosopher of interpretation theory Hans-Georg Gadamer, insights upon which Wiggins and McTighe ground their contemporary curricular project.

IV. The Point of QEQs in the Classroom

By making "understanding" the target outcome of course design, Wiggins and McTighe legitimize my present appeal to Gadamerian philosophy (2005). Understanding is an extremely complex process, but it is in part structured by what Gadamer calls the "logic of question and answer" (Gadamer, 2004). Wiggins and McTighe paraphrase this as the correlation of "essential questions" and "big ideas" (McTighe & Seif, 2002). By exploring the role of questioning in the process of understanding as conceived by Gadamer, we can isolate that kind of question that goes beyond mere commands.

While we can intentionally issue a command, that is, perform a command speech-action, many questions arise like a sudden idea and are much more a passion than an action. Such questions arise and occur to us; it is not so much that we intentionally raise them (see Gadamer, 2004, p. 360). Such questions happen. We do not *make* these questions happen. It is these sorts of questions that are central for Gadamer. While Gadamer speaks of questions in general, his development pertains more precisely to QEQs.

There is, according to Gadamer, no "tentative or potential attitude of questioning" (2004, p. 368). We cannot merely consider a question in the way in which we can consider multiple potential and often conflicting answers to a question. To consider a question is to be fully asking it. Moreover, while we can understand alternative possibilities of answers to questions, or alternative "meanings," this does not imply that we ourselves are committed to any one possible answer or "mean" any of those possible meanings. As Gadamer writes, "To understand a question means to ask it. To understand meaning is to understand it as an answer to a question" (2004, p. 368). When we understand another person's question, we ask it with her.

Furthermore, when we understand a question another person asks, we also ask it with him and share it with him, and in this way questions facilitate the transferal of meaningful (potential) answers from one person to another. Understanding another person's question entails that I also ask it because there is no potential asking of a question, and so the question becomes "our" question rather than merely hers or his. Achieving this *shared* asking of a question transforms the other person's answers into possibilities that we may consider, and thus makes possible our coming to a new understanding. It is from Gadamer's construal of questions as essentially something shared between speakers that I derive my notion of QEQs.

QEQs also promote reaching an understanding with others by suspending both our judgments and our pre-judgments (or, literally, “prejudices”). For Gadamer, our pre-judgments facilitate understanding not by prematurely settling whatever is at issue, though that is how we often experience their operation, such as with stereotypes. Because, as Gadamer claims, “the tyranny of hidden prejudices... makes us *deaf*” (2004, p. 272, emphasis added), understanding requires us to avoid the arbitrary projection of our prejudices by making them as explicit as possible. Put simply, one needs to be aware of his own biases. To place a pre-judgment in the foreground in order to put it at risk of criticism requires *suspending* its validity (Gadamer, 2004, p. 298). We can open ourselves to such an experience, we can open our biases to criticism, through asking and/or being asked QEQs. As Gadamer writes, “All suspension of judgments and hence, *a fortiori*, of prejudices, has the logical structure of a *question*” (2004, p. 299). Questions, or at least QEQs, are *suspensions* of judgments, *suspensions* of assertions. By suspending our prejudices we open ourselves to truly hearing what another person has to say rather than pretentiously assuming that we have “heard it all before.”

An important lesson can be derived here about instructors hearing student questions. It is not simply that teachers need to ask QEQs, but that they also need to be open to hearing students ask QEQs. Students, as do all human beings, already possess an innate sense of curiosity and genuine inquiry. Yet since they might pose their questions in somewhat inarticulate ways, it is often up to teachers to hear the “real” question implicit in the ambiguity, and to share (that is, ask) the question with the students. Perhaps our own hidden biases and interests prevent us from hearing the questions students themselves ask, such as when we underestimate students’ capabilities or when we give priority to preparing students for exams over dialogue with them. Because QEQs are concrete acts in which we suspend

judgment and extend (or contract) ourselves to receive what another person has to say, we can claim, paradoxically, that QEQs are a way in which we listen with our mouths. It is precisely as a mode of listening rather than speaking that QEQs break out of the “command” genus.

Other speech acts belonging to the directive class are orders, requests and pleas. It makes sense to say that these three have what Searle calls “the direction of fit,” where the world matches up with the words, where we intend for others to realize what we say in a way that directly relates to the content of what we say. If someone were to pick up my mail after I said to him, “Please pick up my mail,” his actions would realize what I said. In this way, the world would come to “fit” with my words. When we share a QEQ, however, we are not saying anything about what the other person ought to do. We are not providing them with guidance on what ought to be said, either. So when another person happens to offer an answer to our question, her doing so has in no way realized the propositional content of our question. As QEQs do not have a propositional content, there is no particular response that “fits” the question.

Is “directive” the apt illocutionary class for QEQs, then? Are QEQs basically commands? I do not think so. Clearly, questions do not belong to either the declarative or commissive class in any direct way. Moreover, if questions belonged to the class of expressives, then it seems we could be satisfied by paraphrasing questions as saying, “I don’t know.” The only other class left is that of assertives, and questions obviously do not belong to that class. However, they are closer to assertives than directives (Gadamer, 2007, p. 102). Their relation to assertives, or judgments, as we have discussed, is that they *suspend* them. This suggests that we need an additional taxonomic class neglected by Searle, which we can call “suspensives.” Suspensives neither attempt to make the world “fit” with our words, as with commis-

sives and directives, nor attempt to make our words “fit” the world, as with assertives. Suspensives are unique acts in that their point is not, as Searle claims, to get someone to answer, but rather to uncover possibilities about a subject matter by way of attempting to get another person to share our question so that we might exchange possible answers. Such utterances invert the normal expressiveness of speech, transforming it into receptive speech, which is why QEQs are more a mode of listening than speaking.

When teachers think about the kinds of questions they *actually* ask in the classroom (or questions that they hear students asking), do they include QEQs? Should they? Two recent developments in curricular design and discussion practices suggest that they should.

V. The Possibilities of QEQs in the Classroom

A “third-wave”⁴ resurgence of the promotion of questioning in the classroom holds that teachers can ask better questions in more effective ways and that students’ natural inclination to question can be cultivated and nurtured. This attempt at rehabilitating questioning is rooted in learning theories—such as David A. Kolb’s “Experiential Learning Theory”—that seek to transcend traditional cognitive and behavioral learning theories stressed in standards based reform (de Jesus et al., 2004).

Two recent constructive projects in this third wave seem to take seriously the possibility of asking and getting students to ask questions that approximate QEQs. For Wiggins and McTighe, as well as for Morgan and Saxton, questioning is an activity by which human beings grow into responsible democratic citizens. Wiggins and McTighe develop an inquiry-based curriculum, which organizes questions coherently by positing “understanding” as the achievement target, and

Morgan and Saxton anchor questioning in the affective rather than cognitive dimension of the human person.

In their texts and workbooks on curriculum development, titled *Understanding by Design*, Wiggins and McTighe make “understanding” the achievement target—rather than knowledge of arbitrary facts or the appropriation of random skill sets—and suggest how to adapt questioning activities accordingly (2001, p. 24). Wiggins and McTighe point out that “traditional curricula documents frame core content in fact-like statements rather than revealing them to be culminating summary insights, derived from questions and inquiries” (2001, p. 27). Thus, they begin their project with a task central to Gadamerian philosophy: “If knowledge is made up of answers, then what were the questions that gave rise to textbook or teacher answers and current subject-matter knowledge answers?” (2001, p. 33)

The first step they propose is to transpose content standards and outcome statements into the interrogative mood, and then design assignment and assessment questions that evoke possible answers (2001, p. 30; see also Wilhelm, 2007, p. 45). The former questions they call “essential questions,” and the latter assignment questions they call “unit questions.” Unit questions frame a specific set of lessons designed to point to and uncover essential questions. For example, “Is science fiction great literature?” might guide a specific lesson or set of lessons; but “Are ‘good reads’ good books?” could guide the entire curriculum of a language arts faculty in a school district (Wiggins & McTighe, 2001, p. 30). They characterize essential questions as those that go to the heart of a discipline, that recur naturally in one’s learning of and within the history of a field, and that raise other important questions. They characterize unit questions as those that provide topic-specific doorways to essential questions, that have no one obvious right answer, and that are deliberately framed to provoke student interest.

4 The first wave was in the early 1900s with Stevens, the second was in the 1970s, and the third is currently underway.

What Wiggins and McTighe call “entry-point” questions provide the concrete and immediate connection students require to find that they already have a stake claimed in the essential question. They characterize entry-point questions as those that are framed for maximal simplicity, worded in student-friendly language, and point toward larger unit and essential questions. Organizing curricula in accordance with essential, unit, and entry-point questions both connects questions students already ask with unit and essential questions, and serves to establish priorities in a course. Through these questions, students simulate and recreate some of the questioning by which knowledge was established. That is, students are allowed to share the questions. All three levels of questions in Wiggins and McTighe are, then, essentially QEQs in that they ground the multiplicity of possible answers and their point is for others to share the questions rather than merely to answer them.

In their manual of questions, titled *Asking Better Questions*, Morgan and Saxton construe questioning as rooted in the affective dimension of humans. By so construing questioning, Morgan and Saxton underscore that questioning is not just a form of thinking, but involves desire and interest—that is, passion. The employment of Bloom’s taxonomy for the organization and execution of questions is a case in point. While Bloom’s taxonomy provides a logical organization to the development of thinking, this does not mean that instructors can organize their questions in a corresponding way. See, for example, the University of Alabama School of Medicine’s teaching tips on effective questioning: “One good strategy is to start with convergent questions and then continue with divergent questions, perhaps asking questions in hierarchical sequence and building from the recall of facts to higher level of thinking and problem-solving” (Office of Curriculum Management, 2008). When it comes to questioning, what matters is the interest good questions stimulate

in the student. A factual or recall question simply does not grab anyone’s attention. As Morgan and Saxton (2006) point out, it is also foolish to think that only higher-order questions elicit higher-order thinking (p. 18). A simple question could cause students to think in all sorts of ways. Rather than denigrating the recall question, for instance, they point out how it can help a shy student get involved without exposing too much of himself (Morgan and Saxton, 2006, p. 64). It is not whether this or that kind of question is the key to learning, or that one kind of question ought to be discouraged and another supported. Any question has the potential to help engage students. Bloom’s taxonomic structure imposed on classroom questioning inhibits natural inquiry, and so is not a constructive way to plan question sessions. Questions instead should spring from the interest both students and teachers have in the subject matter. That is, both students and instructors ought to share the questions. Morgan and Saxton urge that the principle guide to asking effective questions in the classroom is not “what kind of thinking do I want my students to perform?” but “how will my question help students engage in and with the material?” (2006, p. 73) As with the kinds of questions that Wiggins and McTighe promote as central to curriculum design, engaging questions are essentially QEQs.

Beside instructors attempting to ask engaging questions, students also need to learn to ask questions themselves. This crucial practice must be implemented in the classroom because in asking their own questions, students gain responsibility for their own learning. Drake has found that questioning is a skill that improves with explicit instruction (1998). Morgan and Saxton cover a variety of means for instructing students to ask questions. Among the strategies Morgan and Saxton list are modeling the formulation of questions, reflecting on and analyzing questions that fueled a specific discussion, and focusing attention on the precise development of a question (2006). There are also a

number of games and activities instructors could play with students to help them appropriate the skill of asking good questions: “hot seat”—where a student sits in the middle of a group and the others ask a specified set of questions; “question-question”—where students can only respond to a question with their own question which must remain connected to the subject of the preceding question; “answer-question”—where students identify the question to which a particular statement is the answer; “role-playing”—where students act as detectives or reporters or psychologists in interviewing a particular student or character; and analyzing a tape recording in which a variety of questions are asked (2006, p. 109).

While questioning practices in the classroom call for revision, Wiggins and McTighe as well as Morgan and Saxton have set out to meet this challenge by developing strategies for asking, and teaching students to ask, better questions. Fundamental to their endeavors, though perhaps not sufficiently stressed, is the need for asking—and even recognizing when students themselves ask—QEQs.

VI. *The Problem with QEQs in the Classroom*

Educators are responsible for the kinds of questions we ask and the kinds of agents we cultivate by way of our questions. Do our questions generate habits of mere obedience to commands, in which students simply answer questions and are oriented toward the closure of questions and the status quo? Or are our questions genuine, such that they liberate students from these restraints, nurturing crucial habits of critical thinking by way of questions, and disposing students to openness to further ideas? Do mere commands fulfill our goals? As we have seen, the majority of questions posed by instructors in the classroom, even during discussions, are not genuine on any account of questions. The questions are not asked out of a willingness to learn something new. They are not asked in order to invite the contribution of another to the unfolding of a

disputable subject matter. They are not asked in order to share them with students. Yet asking questions makes up a significant amount of a teacher’s instructional time.

My claim is that a proper goal of asking questions in the classroom is not to get students to answer them, but *to get students to ask them with us*. Asking a QEQ in particular is an achievement, not a problem to be dissolved. In this way students can come to appreciate various answers proposed in traditions of thinking within a specific field of study. If students do not understand, and thus *do not ask*, the fundamental questions grounding and defining the boundaries of a particular field, they will not be able to take ownership of and responsibility for the various answers proposed to those questions that make up the content of a course. Moreover, situating course content as answers to questions enables students to critically evaluate, rather than naively accept, that material.

This is a far from easy task. How does anyone show that he or she understands a question? While we can display to others that we understand a command simply by performing what is requested, and while we can display that we understand an assertion by either accepting or rejecting it, what do we do that displays our understanding of a question? Furthermore, if questions are basically a form of command, then why is it that we use questions rather than commands in the classroom? I propose that it is because there is a unique feature of QEQs, that they build community by way of shared questioning, a feature that cannot be captured in commands, and that educators often, though perhaps not intentionally, exploit this feature of QEQs in disguising their commands in the interrogative mood.

If our goal is merely to have students display their knowledge or skill sets, then we can achieve these goals without ever asking a question. A case in point is the dreaded “multiple choice” quiz. I have found that dropping the interrogative structure altogether makes the

construction of good multiple choice “questions” much easier. Consider, too, the game of “Twenty Questions.” This game could be rephrased as a game of “true/false” statements. This fact has made it easy to create an algorithm for the automation of the game, as anyone familiar with the recent “20Q” phenomenon can attest (20Q.net, 1998-2009).

QEQs, alternatively, cannot be automated. We cannot make another person ask a question in such a way that it is his own. If part of the point of QEQs is to get someone to ask them, then part of our challenge as educators is to figure out how to *motivate* students to ask them with us. Simply asking questions of students, it seems, will not do. Perhaps we need to tap into their innate sense of questioning. Or, perhaps we ought strategically to contradict ourselves. How can you teach someone to question? Is questioning—insofar as it is a passion rather than an action—something that can even be taught?

To repeat in conclusion, while dogs and gods “bark orders,” questioning is a uniquely human activity. It is crucial to distinguish between issuing commands and asking questions because, in the vast majority of uses of questions in the classroom, they can be reduced without loss of meaning and nuance to commands. Indeed, the major schools of twentieth century analytic philosophy of language stress this relation between questions and commands, claiming that all real questions belong to the command genus. The proper goal of asking QEQs in the classroom is not—however counterintuitive this may seem—to get learners to answer them, but instead to get learners to ask them in such a way that the questions become their own or, alternatively, to articulate the sense of questioning they already possess. Just as our sense of purpose, our sense of humor, and our sense of balance can be harnessed and cultivated in the classroom, so also can our sense of questioning be perfected in an appropriate classroom environment. By appropriating such questions as QEQs, learners are situated

in a way that enables them to consider and appreciate proposed answers to the questions. ■■

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Electric Engagement: The Use of Classroom Response Technology in Four Disciplines

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Abstract

This article explores the pedagogical experiences of four professors in distinct disciplines using classroom response systems (most commonly known as *clickers* or *ActiVotes*). Response system technology enables anonymous polling of students which can facilitate classroom management, provide immediate feedback, increase student interactivity, and stimulate discussion in a variety of ways.

Keywords

clickers, ActiVote, interactive pedagogy, preservice teachers, educational technology

Introduction

Great teaching is possible with chalk and a blackboard, just as painfully inept teaching is possible with the most elaborate technological tools. Nevertheless, many of us who want to maximize the effect of our teaching explore electronic enhancements for our pedagogy, particularly in teaching today's "millennial generation." Students appreciate these efforts, often expressing positive attitudes toward the use of technology in the classroom and teachers who use technical enhancements skillfully.

Although the term *digital native* is often applied to traditional college-aged students, students' comfort levels with technology vary widely based on such factors as interest, aptitude, and previous exposure. While those of us raised in the days of black-and-white television may look with awe at students who can text without looking at their phones, familiarity with the surface levels of gadgetry does not equate with an understanding of how the technology works, nor does this familiarity necessarily imply the ability to learn other applications quickly. Teachers who want to incorporate technological enhancements into their classroom pedagogy, then, must consider what value the enhancement will add to the class, how readily students can assimilate to its use, and how students may employ this skill when they leave the ivory towers of the academy. Accordingly, the cross-disciplinary research presented in this paper focuses on a simple but effective technology that students learn to

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use in seconds, the Classroom Response System, which allows teachers to pose questions to students, have them respond anonymously, and then have the option of projecting the answers for all to see. Systems of this sort are quickly becoming available not only at institutions of higher education, but also at K-12 schools. The versatility, effectiveness, and accessibility of this pedagogical enhancement prompted the four authors from distinct disciplines to explore the use of response systems in our classes with particular focus on how the use of this technology in university courses influences the attitudes of preservice teachers and the likelihood that they will use this tool in their own classrooms.

This paper begins with brief analyses of the educational and technical contexts for response system technology. Each of the four authors then provides an overview of how this technology is employed in one or more courses. Although each narrative focuses on effective use of response technology in a specific discipline without particular regard to students' majors, the inclusion of education majors in each course discussed binds the narratives together with a common thread. Furthering this united focus, all of the education majors in the classes involved in this research were asked to respond to a survey designed to gauge not only their satisfaction with the technology, but also their attitudes toward using this technology in their own future classrooms. The data resulting from this survey and implications for teaching and future research conclude this report.

Educational Context

The treatment of technological enhancements in higher education takes on particular significance when the students will soon be teachers in their own right. Education majors must learn not only instructional methods and the content of their discipline, but also technical teaching skills. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education clearly recognizes the need for technologically savvy teacher candidates,

as five of their six unit standards include some form of technology awareness (NCATE, 2008). Newly graduated teachers are often expected to serve as technological experts in schools and, indeed, prove instrumental in introducing technology into K-12 schools when adequately equipped for the challenge (Evans & Gunter, 2004), but they often feel unprepared for these demands (Wright & Wilson, 2005). Perhaps most importantly, teachers at all levels must be aware of the temptation to adopt technology without considering the desired outcomes (Flick & Bell, 2000) and learn to focus on enabling student learning rather than simply reinforcing traditional lecturer-focused modes of instruction (Kennewell et al., 2008). Response technology enhances student involvement and enables reflective teachers of any subject, at any level, to make their teaching contingent on student understanding.

Technical Context

Although this article focuses on teaching rather than technology, we provide this brief section illustrating the basics of response systems for those who may not be familiar with them. Anyone watching the television shows *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* or *One vs. 100* sees a response system in action when the host poses a question, audience members press buttons near their seats, and everyone sees the results on a central screen. The technology works similarly in the classroom where a teacher can pose spontaneous or pre-scripted questions, collect students' responses via wireless remote controls, and project the results so that students can see not only if they selected the desired answer, but also how their answers compare with those of the rest of the class. As our purpose here is to focus on pedagogy and as three different systems are used by the authors, we refer the reader interested in technical details to Lowery's (2005) review of some of the most prominent commercial response system packages in the post-secondary classroom. While this technology has been available for many years, only recently has the

price enabled its adoption in the educational mainstream. The simplicity and effectiveness of this teaching tool has spurred rapid adoption not only in universities but in primary and secondary schools as well.

Response systems can enhance classroom teaching in multiple ways at multiple levels (Roschelle, 2003). Students today are comfortable with handheld technology: remote controls, iPods, cell phones, and video game controllers. Giving them a similar device in the classroom puts them in familiar territory where they may more readily engage class content. Using these hand-held devices, students test their understanding anonymously and immediately in a low-risk environment, leading to a sense of ownership; students actively select their answers rather than observing passively while someone else answers. This sense of ownership, in turn, often increases students' willingness to speak, and speaking can be used to heighten the quality of students' thought (Cuseo, Fecas, and Thompson, 2007). Perhaps most importantly, students enjoy responding with controllers and willingly engage in thought and discussion.

Response System Pedagogy in Four Disciplines

Education majors need to focus not only on skills (e.g., expertise in pedagogy, classroom management, and the application of instructional techniques), but also on content knowledge as an equal, perhaps even greater, requirement (Totten, 2008). This means, for many universities, that education majors each have dual homes, the School of Education and their content discipline within the College of Arts and Sciences, making them ideal candidates for interdisciplinary research. Moreover, these students will need to consider the use of technological teaching enhancements for their own classrooms in the future. To investigate the effect of response system technology on these preservice teachers, we identified professors in biology, education, English, and political science who use response systems

in classes with significant numbers of education majors. We then designed a questionnaire to examine teacher candidates' attitudes toward this technology in their current and future classes.

Each of the authors here employs response system technology in a different way, for a different audience, and with a different class size, yet all share the same core goal of increasing student engagement and thought.

- » In biology, response technology primarily addresses issues of classroom management: increasing student engagement, monitoring attendance, gauging understanding of lecture information, and administering weekly quizzes and exams.
- » The education faculty targets student preparation for standardized testing, using response technology to make review less tedious and more meaningful with instant feedback and follow-up discussion. Students also have the opportunity to employ ActiVote technology in their own presentations.
- » The English grammar teacher uses clickers to promote full-class participation, engagement, and thought across multiple levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.
- » In political science, this technology enables measurement of students' awareness of civic issues and helps students explore their own perceptions and attitudes, as well as those of their classmates.

All of these applications are relevant to the teaching our candidates will undertake after graduation, and here we explore how our teaching with technology affects their perception of, and desire to use, the same. In the pages that follow, each of us will briefly discuss our approach to response technology, the effects we have seen in our classrooms, and how we hope our Education majors may apply our models to their future

teaching. Additionally, each subject heading serves as a link to embedded examples in each discipline.

Biology

The sophomore-level Introduction to Cell and Molecular Biology lecture class is required of both secondary education majors who focus on biology and of biology majors. The course typically enrolls approximately sixty students and employs a response system extensively on a daily basis. I issue each student a clicker during the first class meeting, and student information and responses are linked to their individual clickers for the duration of the semester. My main goal when I implemented this system in the course in Spring 2008 was to encourage students to engage in class rather than simply to transcribe notes while I lectured. Use of this system has not only helped me to accomplish that important goal, but has also yielded unexpected benefits.

Lectures for this course primarily consist of PowerPoint presentations. To promote student engagement during lecture, I embed clicker question prompts pertaining to material covered during that class session into the presentations. The questions are in either multiple choice or numerical response formats and are designed to encourage critical thinking rather than simple recall. To encourage maximum class participation and thoughtful responses, all students earn, as bonus points on their final point totals, a percentage of the total number of response system questions that they answered correctly during the semester. Students are not penalized for incorrect responses. This also encourages attendance since they know that if they are absent, they forfeit the chance to earn points that day. A histogram showing the distribution of students' answers is displayed after each question, giving me, as the instructor, a good measure of the level of understanding of the class. This type of formative assessment has been suggested as one of the main advantages of response systems in science classrooms (Paschal, 2002)

because it affords the instructor the opportunity to make teaching contingent on student understanding by identifying and reviewing topics that students are having particular trouble with and also gives students an idea of how their level of understanding compares to that of their peers. These were the benefits I expected when I implemented clickers in my classroom.

A quotidian, but important, classroom function simplified by the use of clickers is taking attendance. In a class this size, reading the roll can take valuable minutes, but as the system includes a built-in Attendance function, this task now takes approximately twenty seconds. Attendance reports can also be generated from students' use of clickers in class on any given day, but I find the 20 seconds it takes to emphasize the importance of attending class well worth the investment of time. The only disadvantage I have found in taking attendance this way is that it takes me much longer to learn students' names.

Another unexpected benefit I have found lies in using the system to administer quizzes and exams. Because weekly quizzes are relatively short (usually five multiple-choice questions), they are not printed; rather, they are projected onto a screen at the front of the class, and students enter their answers on their clickers at their own pace. For longer exams which may have 30-50 multiple-choice questions along with essay questions, students receive paper copies and enter their answers to the multiple choice section on the clickers. The system instantly grades this portion of the examination, and any necessary corrections can be entered and grades recalculated with the click of a button. I have also significantly reduced the amount of paper I use in the class by not printing out quizzes and eliminating the use of Scantron® sheets.

The final benefit I have found is the option to use the system anonymously to poll the class. This is especially useful when discussing bioethical issues (e.g. stem cell research or genetic engineering) about which

students might not express their opinions honestly due to social pressure or fear of reprisal. Although I did not anticipate this usage, it has proven very beneficial in stimulating thought and discussion on controversial topics.

The primary advantages I have found with use of clicker technology have been an increase in class participation, the ease of grading multiple choice questions on quizzes and exams, and speed of attendance assessment. Students report overall satisfaction with the system, especially as their comfort level with this technology increases over the duration of the semester.

Education

In the School of Education, we offer twelve certification area degree programs. For each program, we must provide our preservice teachers the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions for seamless transitions into the K-12 classroom. Two of the many components embedded into this preparation are the effective use of instructional technology and the content and pedagogical knowledge needed to be successful both in the classroom and on required state certification examinations. Those who want to teach in the public schools in South Carolina are also required by law (SCDE, 2000) to demonstrate technology proficiency every five years after initial certification. Additionally K-12 curriculum standards for English, math, science, and social studies all mandate that both teachers and students employ technology in the classroom. Thus, teacher preparation programs must both train preservice teachers to use technological enhancements in their teaching and model appropriate use of these technological tools.

One way we target technology proficiency in our students is by equipping each university education classroom with Promethean ActivBoards, the same technology employed in our surrounding school districts (including ActiVotes: our K-12 response system technology). Education faculty are strongly encouraged to embed technology into their own teaching and to

provide opportunities for teacher candidates to experience technology from both the instructor's and the student's perspectives. According to the *National Science Education Standards*, "The goal of science is to understand the natural world, and the goal of technology is to make modifications in the world to meet human needs" (NRC, 1996, p. 24). This charge from the science community recognizes the importance of educators infusing the real world connections of technology usage into the daily lives of students.

As the primary instructor for all science methods courses including elementary, middle-level and secondary majors, I embed the use of ActiVotes into each class meeting to prompt discussion, elicit predications and hypotheses, and respond to continuum prompts, as well as collect, present, and analyze data immediately. All of these techniques support my dual goals of practicing questions for the standardized exams they must pass to become certified teachers and modeling the use of instructional technology. The use of response technology here deemphasizes the "teach to the test" approach that permeates standards-driven classrooms (Wash, 2007). When students arrive in one of my science methods courses, they each take an ActiVote remote control. As a part of the daily routine, I present practice questions related to the standardized exams. As each question appears, students submit their answers. After everyone has made a selection, the response data and correct answer are displayed, and I guide student discussion of both the content and testing strategies related to the question. The anonymous nature of the response allows each student to feel comfortable in submitting an answer. Although students are often unwilling to express an initial answer openly, many enthusiastically join follow-up conversations, which results in enhanced content knowledge and learner confidence.

Students clearly understand the value of response technology. Since I have begun employing ActiVotes in class, students have voluntarily incorporated this

technology in their own class presentations. Techniques used by students have ranged from simple multiple-choice items based on assigned readings to exploratory opinion-seeking questions. The fact that most of these students delve into this technology and implement response opportunities on their own before they have received formal training on the equipment is a testament to the ease of use for this technology. The feedback from students during class is positive, and their enthusiasm for using and planning for the use of this technology is evident from their comments as well as their implementation.

English

While there is considerable flexibility in English classes for education majors, all middle level English language arts majors must take a sophomore-level Modern English Grammar course, and other teacher candidates often enroll as well. This class, therefore, is the English focus in this report. Enrollment averages 20 students, of whom roughly 50% are education majors. Students in this course need to understand the rules and rationale for standard American English. Getting students to engage in higher-order thinking in this environment has proven difficult. Before I discovered clickers, I struggled with negative perceptions of the material, lack of involvement in class, and unwillingness to engage mentally with the material. Formal assessments indicated that students memorized rules, but failed to understand underlying concepts.

When I began teaching this class five years ago, I employed many paper-based analysis exercises, but soon found that these discouraged conversation as students focused on their desks. The next semester I shifted some activities to PowerPoint to encourage students to look up and speak up; while this did improve discussion, there was still little evidence of analysis. Cautiously encouraged, I embedded key points from the textbook and comics illustrating grammatical elements into the PowerPoint slides; I also added

questions to prompt discussion. Student reaction was generally favorable, but some students complained of too much PowerPoint, and class discussions were still dominated by a few vocal individuals; worse, students' work still exhibited little evidence of higher-order thinking. In Spring of 2007, I attended a training session provided by our IT department where clicker technology was showcased and saw the potential not only to improve classroom interaction, but also to encourage analysis and evaluation. In the remainder of this narrative, I discuss how I employ clickers to elicit higher-level thought, using Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956; Anderson, et al., 2001; and *cf.* Marlow, 2009) as a frame of reference.

The lowest levels of thinking are knowledge recollection and comprehension. At this level, I lead students into understanding a concept by asking questions which guide them through a series of response prompts to a logical conclusion. Given the interactivity engendered by a response system, this questioning often initiates discussion, and students put their knowledge and understanding to work in resolving misunderstandings among themselves. Because students have made a choice, they feel invested; those who would normally sit quietly and listen to others now participate vociferously, often without realizing that they have applied their knowledge to argue grammatical points.

I frequently induce students into understanding grammatical issues by having them identify sentence parts in a comic strip and encouraging them to apply their newly gained understanding to real-life errors excerpted from student papers. To maximize student thought and discussion, I speak only to moderate discussion or to guide students gently when the deliberation loses traction. Similarly, when a clicker response prompt fails to generate a clear consensus, I guide students into deeper analysis by encouraging them to explore and discuss possibilities amongst themselves in small groups, thereby engaging them in both analysis

of the issue and evaluation of the best solution. I have found that clickers enhance small group discussion when the discussions culminate with a clicker response in which each group is allowed only one response and therefore must reach accord before submitting their vote.

While the eventual outcome for students is necessarily predetermined in the grammar class, giving students some control over their learning has made a difference. Final examinations and writing assessments for my grammar students today exhibit analytical thinking and understanding of core concepts which were lacking before I implemented response system technology.

Political Science

I use clickers every semester to teach Introduction to American Politics, although my use of student response systems would be applicable across a range of social science disciplines (including sociology, psychology, and economics). The class typically enrolls over 100 students, and a primary challenge of this course is to keep a range of students engaged in the lectures while also building the prerequisite knowledge for other political science courses. In addressing this challenge, I use student response systems to demonstrate key concepts and to keep students engaged and interested in lecture content.

I most frequently utilize clickers in Introduction to American Politics to poll the students on a variety of topics intended to generate student interest and encourage discussion. My students look forward to participating in the electronic surveys because they are eager to see the immediate graphical depiction of the poll results. I begin my lecture on civil liberties, for example, by asking the students to identify from a list the rights protected by the First Amendment. I then ask my class to identify the members of the Simpsons family. Reflecting the results of a similar national poll (McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum, 2006),

my class can much more readily identify *Simpsons* characters than civil rights. (Seventy-two percent of Americans can name one civil right, while only 28% can name two. Sixty-five percent can name one *Simpsons* character, and 52% can name two. Although my classes' percentages are higher in each case, the ratio is usually the same.) My students find the results of this poll amusing and embarrassing, and we talk about why Americans do not know much about civil liberties even though they think they are important. After this poll, my students are eager to learn and discuss civil liberties for the rest of the week.

In addition to encouraging student participation and piquing student interest, clickers offer the unique advantage of demonstrating course concepts through student polling. Much of political science research is about political behavior, and how attitudes and ideas are expressed in political participation. When it comes to congressional approval ratings, for example, Americans always approve of their own representatives more than they approve of Congress itself. Before I discuss this phenomenon with my students, I survey them on their approval rating of their representative versus their approval of Congress. (Not surprisingly, the results tend to reflect the national averages.) After answering these survey questions, students are interested in discussing why their attitudes are different, and what it is about constituency service and representation that causes these attitudes to occur.

Through instant response polls I also show students differences in political opinions among different demographic and ideological groups. Women tend to hold different opinions than men on social issues, for example, and my students remember the differences better when they can see instant proof of these differences. I similarly demonstrate the effect that ideology has on evaluating policy issues, performance of particular political leaders, or bias in the media. In these ways, clickers allow me to show immediate and relevant

Questions 1-8	Mean
Increase participation in class.	4.7581
Help provide instant feedback on what students know.	4.5806
Increase mental engagement in class.	4.5323
Should be used more often in university classes.	4.4194
Facilitate positive interactions in the classroom	4.3548
Stimulate class discussions.	4.3548
Increase learning.	4.2097
Should be more often in K-12 classes.	4.1452

*Table 1. Aggregated Mean Scores
(Results displayed in descending order)*

evidence and examples from political science and in some cases enable students to engage in the real work of political science in an introductory course.

Another useful application of student response systems is in teaching about surveys themselves. For example, I can demonstrate the ability of surveys to manipulate results through the way questions are asked. Convincing students that question wording makes a difference is sometimes difficult, but made much easier when I can show them that they provide different answers to the same question when it is asked in different ways.

Although it is a daunting task to encourage discussion and participation in a classroom of 120 students, my use of clicker technology has improved the level of engagement in my Introduction to American Politics class. Students enjoy using the technology to share their opinions with each other and seem to remember course concepts better when they are demonstrated through student responses. One of the more interesting outcomes of my using interactive technology in my largest course is that since I have started my attendance levels are much higher. I do not require or take attendance, but in classes where I use clickers I consistently have 80-90% attendance. This speaks strongly of my students'

engagement in course concepts and appreciation of the use of this technology.

Preservice Teacher Attitudes toward Response Technology

In order to assess our students' attitudes toward response technology, we administered a survey to the education majors in each class reported above. The four authors cooperatively developed a survey consisting of twelve questions.

Eight questions used a 5-point Likert scale with indicators from strongly agree (Value: 5) to strongly disagree (Value: 1); they also included a "don't know" option (value: 3). The remaining items were open-response questions. The first two focused on students' past experience and intentions for future use, while the latter focused on issues of particular relevance to the K-12 environment: standardized testing and encouraging higher-ordered thinking with reference to Bloom's Taxonomy. The survey, administered by each faculty member, yielded 62 completed surveys.

Means and standard variations for questions 1-8 were calculated by major and focus area, but as the total numbers of respondents in the early childhood major and focal areas of social studies and English language

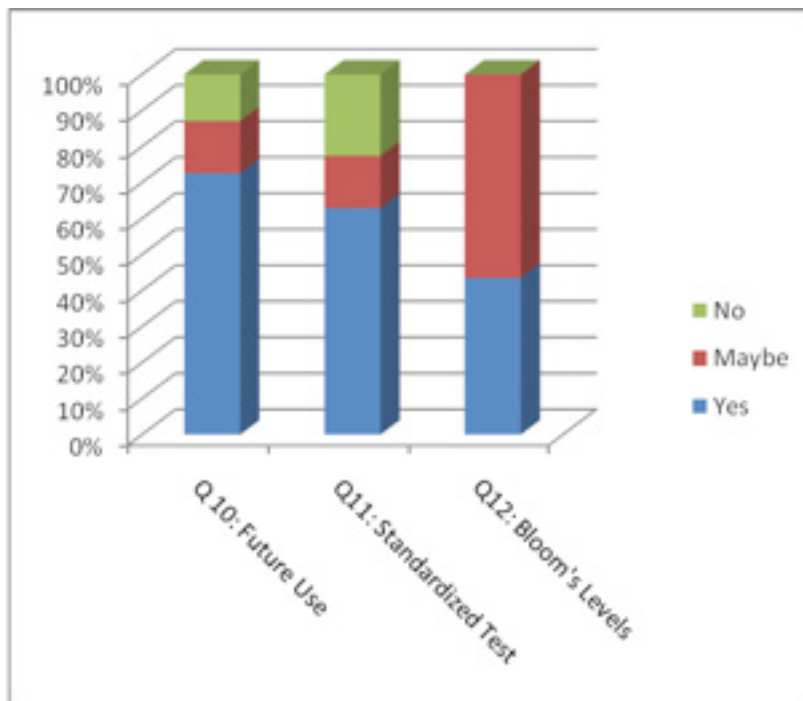


Figure 1. Summary Data for Questions 10-12

arts were small (8, 6, and 8, respectively), this data is proffered above only as anecdotal information; meaningful analysis of these variables will be presented once sufficient data has been collected. Participants also varied widely from freshmen to seniors with focal ages from early childhood through secondary education; the unifying characteristic of the sample was the use of response technology in at least one class.

Our aggregate results (see Table 1) indicate that teacher candidates strongly believe response technology increases participation in class (4.8), yet these future teachers were less convinced that this technology increases learning (4.2) and ranked “should be used more in K-12 classrooms” lowest of all items (4.1). In spite of the relatively low ratings, only 8 of 62 respondents (13%) plan to avoid response technology in their K-12 classrooms, according to their responses on question 10 (see Figure 1). For the open-response question, “Do you think clickers can facilitate standardized test preparation?,” 63% indicated that this technique does

help, with most claiming that using response technology would provide practice and help students with the test format. Twenty-three percent did not believe it would be effective, and 14% were uncommitted. With regard to question 12, only 44% of the candidates indicated that response clickers can be used at varying levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy, but no students expressed serious reservations; the majority (56%) were either unfamiliar with Bloom or suggested response technology could help to a limited degree. Finally, the wide variation in responses to item 9 precludes summarization, but the full narrative of responses is available here.

Discussion and Indications for Further Study.

Our findings from the survey and our reflections are two-fold. First, students clearly recognize that the use of response technology increases participation in class, yet they are much less convinced that this teaching enhancement increases learning or that it should be used in K-12 classes. Clearly, many factors could be

involved in this discrepancy. Because this is our first set of survey data and our total responses are too few to support meaningful differentiation by major, focus area, or progress toward graduation, all of our participants' responses are consolidated, so that the opinions of freshman are undistinguished from those of seniors and students focusing on science are combined with those primarily interested in English.

One of our future goals, then, is to collect enough data to justify analysis of variation in the responses according to major, focal area, and progress toward graduation. We find it a positive note that 72% of our students intend to use response technology when they become teachers. We hope that by modeling the use of this technology in innovative ways, we will guide our students to further consider applications such as standardized test preparation and encouraging higher ordered thinking.

Second, and perhaps more applicable to the general audience, this study highlights the versatility of response technology. Four teachers, each independently targeting increased engagement in the classroom through use of the same technological enhancement, have arrived at significantly different applications. Yet student response to each of these iterations is overwhelmingly positive. There are multiple paths to student engagement; no single approach appears to be more effective than another. As one of our students phrased it, "I believe clickers are a good teaching method as long as the teacher uses them appropriately. They give instant feedback so the students are able to tell how they did and it increases their knowledge!!" Yet, this technology, like any other, can be misused, as pointed out by another student, "[Clickers] could be used as a helpful learning method unless teachers use tricky wording to fool the students instead of allowing their knowledge to flow freely." Our students are both insightful and reinforcing. Our primary reasons for selecting response technology for our classrooms and

for this study are all reflected in the survey narrative responses. Students clearly recognize the pedagogical enhancement in terms of immediate feedback, active engagement, opportunities to participate without fear of embarrassment, and stimulating class discussion. We close this article with one final student quote, "[Clickers] are an excellent, creative, and fun way to teach and learn." ■■

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Accommodating the Diversity Needs of Heterosexual White Male College Students (*You Must Be Joking!*)

John Pruitt

Abstract

By building on theories of inclusive teaching and on cultural critic Richard Dyer's (1997) observation that many of us in Western Europe and the United States are "coloured white" and therefore "people of color," this project sought to determine how teachers should communicate with their heterosexual white male students to avoid ostracizing them as oppressive political forces. Three focus-group sessions of these students, aged 18 to 33, centered on their perspectives of the amount of diversity education covered in their classes, the presentation of the material, and its impact on their lives. Afterwards, they critically analyzed five poems critiquing masculinity, sexuality, race, and gender. With this data, I consider how teachers might discuss texts that explore the similarities and differences among these constructs in a heterogeneous classroom. This research relies on the philosophy that inclusive teaching includes all populations and serves to validate the lives, cultures, and experiences of diverse groups, including straight white men.

Keywords

masculinity, whiteness, diversity, classroom role construction, inclusive teaching

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Introduction

When I attended the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) conference on "Diversity and Learning: A Defining Moment" in 2006, Caryn McTighe Musil of AACU and Laura Rendón of Iowa State University delivered a compelling presentation reinforcing my pedagogy of seeking structural changes by creatively and constructively incorporating race, class, and gender diversity into the college classroom. But during their talk I wondered if we risk excluding our straight white male students by focusing on changing the *status quo* and emphasizing the accomplishments of women, people of color, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) communities.

As an English professor who is *not* a heterosexual white man and who valorizes diversity in teaching, I fear I may exclude this population of potential allies by intentionally seeking to destabilize political hierarchies and decon-

struct grand narratives. A review of Mayberry's (1996) edition of essays on men teaching women's studies, straight teachers approaching gay literature, and white teachers tackling non-white texts also reveals a telling absence of strategies for teachers other than straight white men for approaching texts written by straight white men, and for discussing these texts with their straight white male students.

Considering how to educate these students reinforces the philosophy that inclusive teaching embraces this population and validates their lives, cultures, and experiences. Milner (2005) explains that

[e]nsuring that various cultural, racial, ethnic, gendered, and linguistic groups of people and their experiences are represented in the curriculum is not the only essential feature in providing access, empowerment, and awareness for students of color. The very nature of this content and how it is actually incorporated into the lessons are also critical. (p. 393)

Milner's language implicating *variety* allows us to integrate our straight white male students into our multicultural curriculum. This statement, coupled with cultural critic Dyer's (1997) acute and politically loaded observation that many of us in Western Europe and the United States are "coloured white" and therefore "people of colour" (that is, we carry and act on racial identities), provides the opportunity of allowing instructors to explore the complexities of these students and investigate their classroom interests, needs, and expectations.

In order to probe into the realities of American higher education as perceived by these students, I asked my colleagues at our upper Midwestern two-year open-admission institution in a predominantly working-class and racially homogeneous county to recommend those who participate actively in class discussions. Once I deleted my own former or current students from the list of thirty-six names because of the risk that they might formulate responses extending beliefs and assumptions

that I have communicated to them in class, I contacted the remaining twenty to gauge their interest. From the sixteen who volunteered, I video-recorded three sixty-minute focus-group sessions of five to six members each, with ages ranging from 18 to 33, in order to discern how these men feel about the amount of diversity education covered in their classes, the presentation of the material, and its impact on their social, cultural, and economic lives.

Following these sessions, I conducted a literature class discussion with each group, for which they prepared by reading five short poems critiquing masculinity, sexuality, race, and gender: Walt Whitman's "A Woman Waits for Me," Nikki Giovanni's "Nikki-Rosa," Donald Hall's "Safe Sex," Donna Kate Rushin's "The Bridge Poem," and Marge Piercy's "What Are Big Girls Made Of?"¹ I chose poems rather than a novel or series of essays so that we could discuss the intricacies of the poets' language within a confined space and time through critical discourse analysis (Gee, 2005; Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, and Mosley, 2005), connecting poetic language and rhetorical choices to dimensions of the social world and the power and privilege associated with them. With this data I consider how teachers might discuss texts that explore the similarities and differences among race, class, gender, and sexuality and sexual orientation in a heterogeneous classroom where we aim to foster inclusivity.

Contemporary Straight White American Guy Culture in Higher Education

When masculinity studies became popular in the 1990s, scholars began problematizing male power, subjectivity, and representation across cultures and history. Through the simultaneous popularity of sketches by satirists such as Barry (1995) and Overbey and Overbey (1997), the general reading public learned that men serve as superfluous members of society, habitually seeking sexual partners and celebrating their own emotional reserve

and general incompetence. Recent research responds to these texts by arguing that American popular culture has long demonized straight white men as evil or inadequate. According to Parker (2008) and Nathanson and Young (2001, 2006), misandrist movements escalated when women's studies programs and third-wave feminism ostracized men and portrayed women as victims, martyrs, or heroes. The authors acknowledge the rationale behind this movement, chiefly that exposure to misandry might deepen some men's understanding of or empathy toward women's social and economic plights. However, many journalistic, immersion ethnographies exploring the nuances of masculinity and American guy culture reveal that these ideas about gender roles fail to understand male behavior fully (e.g., Bouldrey, 2001; Leduff, 2007; Vincent, 2006).

Such theories of popular misandry inspired this investigation. Using processes of open and selective coding through the lens of grounded theory—a qualitative research method designed to gather a thorough and detailed understanding of human behavior from small, focused samples (Corbin, 2008)—I divided the interviews into categories on silencing, providing equal opportunities, and allying with under-represented groups. All names are pseudonymous.

Uncomfortable Silence in the Classroom

The opening conversation in each focus group emphasized the premise that these students dread offending their peers of other races, genders, and sexual orientations. Will, for example, suggests that the possibility is “the highest for our group, because what do we know about diversity? I mean, we're our own kind of people, but not according to society, and that's why it's more risky for us offending somebody without even trying.” Rather than participating in productive debates, they imagine that women, people of color, and the LGBTQ population always already interpret their arguments as stemming from an oppressive political source.

Carter, who expands the focus to ideology, substitutes sex, race, and sexual orientation for political affiliation by assuming that straight white men adhere to more conservative philosophies and women, people of color, and homosexuals to extreme liberal ideologies; thus, he likens the heterogeneous classroom to a polarizing space silencing him and his peers: “It's a losing battle because I can't talk about how I'm against affirmative action, gay marriage, pro-choice, because the girls, gays, and blacks attack me and there are more of them than white guys in all my classes. They'll say it's because I'm white so I don't get it, but I do. They don't.” A decade after Dyer argued that “we characteristically see ourselves and believe ourselves seen as unmarked, unspecific, universal” (p. 45), it appears that these students do recognize the political implications of their race and corporeality and should not be held culpable for the unpreventable; thus they reinforce Hill's (2004) more current, extended definition of whiteness as “both absent and present, authorized and repressed, feared and desired, celebrated and denounced, disintegrated and strengthened, post-ed and recovered, everywhere and all at once” (p. 82). When he is challenged about his opinions, Carter feels that he has to choose between getting into an acrimonious confrontation or concealing his real views; in mixed company, he prefers to avoid conflict by keeping his negative views hidden. Such a perspective suggests that these men feel punished for the wrongs of politics and history—holocausts, genocides, slavery, civil rights atrocities—even as they intend to challenge the idea of their complicity without offending their classmates. They remind us that, in order to cultivate a dialogic tension inspiring healthy debate, teachers must reinforce the doctrine that meaning emerges from conflict constructed and reinforced by engaged encounters and interactions with various texts, texts that include their peers.

Larger, national discussions recently confirmed Carter's anxieties. For example, rather than keep-

ing silent, Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., charged the Cambridge, Massachusetts, police department with racial profiling when officers arrested him for breaking and entering and for disorderly conduct. Although accounts of the incident conflict, many of Gates' African-American colleagues, from Harvard neuroscientist Allen Counter to the Reverend Al Sharpton, argued that racial profiling indeed looms not only over Cambridge but throughout the nation. In order for the parties to discuss the issue with one another, President Barack Obama, who had initially targeted the police as "acting stupidly," invited Gates and arresting officer Sergeant James Crowley to the White House to smooth over the racial furor over sips of Bud Light. Such discussions need not become media events. Although beer generally fails to enter the undergraduate classroom, teachers must encourage students such as Carter to communicate rather than internalize their anxieties. In my own observations, classroom conflicts may arise, but no one imposes silence on the conservative students.

Equal Opportunities in Higher Education

Turning to the topic of affirmative action, the men emphasized the importance of meritocratic ideals. When asked about the availability of race-, sex-, and sexual orientation-specific scholarships and grants, students such as Dennis proclaim the virtues of a color-blind society as they strive to stabilize a rickety American ideological structure stratifying race and racial subjects: "Giving special privileges to a person just because of their race is stupid because they have every, the same rights as we do. I don't see why they have those out there other than 1960s tradition. It's total reverse discrimination."

I find the concept of "reverse discrimination" fascinating because one could imagine that, regardless of the direction it moves in, discrimination is discrimination. Still, the charge recurred during the recent Senate Judiciary Committee confirmation hearings on

Sonia Sotomayor's nomination to the U. S. Supreme Court. At the annual Judge Mario G. Olmos Law and Cultural Diversity Lecture at the University of California, Berkeley, in 2001, Sotomayor said, "I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life." Asserting that judges' identities affect legal outcomes while amending her statement with the qualifier that not all women or members of a minority group adhere to one uniform perspective, the nominee's argument reverberated through a variety of media outlets. Even on Twitter, Newt Gingrich joined conservative pundits such as Ann Coulter and Rush Limbaugh in labeling the court nominee a "reverse racist." We can argue that these politicians and commentators fail to see racism unless they feel it directed against them. Such perspectives articulate the burgeoning white victim identity upheld through the discourse of comparative disadvantage among the students in my focus groups. Pete, for example, agreed with Dennis, particularly opposing the symbolic value of financial reparations owed to disenfranchised groups: "I think some people see it as a time issue with the scholarships too, minority groups saying, for example, saying that African Americans should get scholarships because of their history, that they were suppressed centuries ago, and a lot of people I think feel that now it's more the playing field has evened."

Feagin and O'Brien (2003) find similar support for merit-based hiring among affluent white men in corporate settings. Lipsitz (2005) and Michaels (2006) explain the white population's investment in the hierarchical structure of racial difference, noting that whiteness contributes to financial advantages at the expense of other races through economic channels and policies (e.g., the discriminatory housing market, insider networks, and nepotism). My working-class students, members of a social and political group facing a finan-

cial aid crisis, contribute to these perspectives that affirmative action and equal opportunity create a sense of injustice among those who fail to benefit. When asked if they might apply for a scholarship targeting straight white men in the shadow of the proposal submitted by the University of Rhode Island's College Republicans to the university's Student Senate in 2007, Pete explained that "It'd be considered racist and would end before it began," and Russ admitted that he would apply, although he added, "but I wouldn't let anybody know I did it."

On Allying with Under-Represented Groups

Many invitations have been extended to faculty, staff, and students to seek training to become allies to underserved or under-represented groups such as women, people of color, persons with disabilities, and the LGBTQ community. Davis and Wagner (2005), for example, suggest that we must help men acknowledge their unearned privilege through assorted "step-forward" (privilege) and "step-back" (oppression) group exercises. Such interventions, they argue, challenge participants to view messages about being straight white men more critically in spite of cultural pressure. They conclude that "[t]he emotions denied men as a result of hegemonic masculinity may be key to the often locked doors that keep the development of social justice attitudes and actions outside men's experience" (p. 39). The answer, they suggest, is communication with groups that straight white male students typically, if unintentionally, disregard.

Despite this wisdom, although they profess interest in participating in such programs, these students fear a moderate level of retaliation from their peers, especially if they choose to join a gay/straight alliance. Martin wonders, "If I were to join something like that, [laughs] what I'm getting at is, would I be seen like 'What's that breeder doing here?'" and Tom illustrates the pressure exerted on heterosexuals who joined his high school's alliance when he confesses that "you

would not join the gay/straight alliance unless you were gay, like the 'straight' was kind of ignored." However, they all agreed that straight white men do belong in multicultural student groups, for Martin clarifies that "we are multicultural, like we're a race." At the same time, they invoke stereotypes of different racial groups that mark their separation from these groups: when asked about the existence of white culture within a multicultural dynamic, Martin notes, "we can't sing or dance or play basketball." Such a facetious argument nevertheless discloses additional evidence of whiteness as a set of cultural practices defined through absences, in this case of talent and physical endurance, and reinforces the theory that those who occupy positions of cultural hegemony cling to the neutral and unsituated. Finally, when asked if they would contribute to public awareness campaigns organized by the multicultural student groups, Martin seriously queries, "Can we even join?" Such lack of sustained contact with multicultural student organizations suggests that, despite their arguing that they socialize with friends and acquaintances of different races and sexual orientations, these students accumulate many ideas about these groups from a distance, that is, from other white friends or from the media. Isolation from these groups may partially explain misrepresentations, misunderstandings, and stereotypes, an isolation seeping into classes where they fear participating in debates they will presumably lose.

In terms of group dynamics, they also invoke the heterogeneous classroom, student body, and campus social and political organizations via Pierre Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* (1991), a malleable, constantly shifting space constituting a group's system of social practices and beliefs. The habitus guides the choices, attitudes, and perceptions of the members without adhering to prescribed dogma, thus the members form their identities by comparing their own habitus with alternative social systems. Hence the importance of adjusting social behavior when interacting with the members of

an unfamiliar habitus. To these men, however, adjusting is unrealistic, for their embodied and physical maleness, whiteness, and heterosexuality, they argue, inevitably interrupt an open dialogue regardless of setting.

Perspectives on Poetry I: A Universal Humanity

As we have seen, many of these college men maintain complex or inconsistent views on important diversity issues and often juggle contradictory ideas, evidenced by their fluctuations between liberal and conventional perspectives. In fact, when deliberating over the poetry with them in a makeshift literature class discussion, I discovered that they became rather hostile toward some of the subject matter and chose to emphasize the liberalism of *universal experience* in order to feel included in the poets' arguments. Such a conversation emerged during the discussion of Rushin's "The Bridge Poem," which, according to Alex, speaks of a weary persona who "feels that no one understands her," particularly in this egregious passage:

I explain my mother to my father
 my father to my little sister
 My little sister to my brother
 my brother to the white feminists
 The white feminists to the Black church folks
 the Black church folks to the ex-hippies
 the ex-hippies to the Black separatists
 the Black separatists to the artists (9-17)

When I asked the group why this particular passage stung them, Derek replied, "she thinks pretty highly of herself because she's the one everyone goes to for this *common knowledge*. Maybe it's more of a complaint that people ask these questions because *we should already know these answers*" (emphasis added). Will agreed, adding that "she tapped into something *universal*. On the one hand, know thyself as your own individual and then go out and answer questions. But then being a bridge to nowhere and shutting down channels of communication, which isn't constructive" (emphasis

added). The conversation became more personal during the discussion of Giovanni's "Nikki-Rosa," which Eric denounced because the poem appears to ostracize the white community in the following lines:

and I really hope no white person ever has cause
 to write about me
 because they never understand
 Black love is Black wealth and they'll
 probably talk about my hard childhood
 and never understand that
 all the while I was quite happy (29-35)

When I asked for the reason behind his resentment, he replied, "I understand my black friends. They're like me, that's why we're friends. They're normal people like everybody else."

In one respect, Alex, Derek, and Eric seek to forge alliances through commonalities, hence their essentialist language of "universal" values and humanity and Derek's statement that divergent groups seek out Rushin's persona for "common knowledge." Indeed, the concept of the "universal" in the logical deliberation of validating arguments refers to truth in all contexts. However, the language may foreground the romanticized and idealistic razing of ideological structures sustaining inequalities, reflected in Eric's statement that his black friends are "like everybody else" (an unnerving phrase that teachers often confront in their students' writing).

What the students overlook, particularly in Rushin's poem, links to the persona's confession that before bridging her multiple identities, she must construct a bridge to her "true self" in order to be "useful": "The bridge I must be / Is the bridge to my own power / I must translate / My own fears / Mediate / My own weaknesses" (49-54). Rushin thus illuminates her resistance to the compulsion to explain herself and her often conflicting personal and cultural histories as her peers seek to ferret out a universal truth or identity. Dyer (1997) contributes to the discussion of the universal by

suggesting that the power inherent to whiteness derives from a “powerful position [...] of being ‘just’ human” (p. 2). The use of such hegemonic language also reflects McCaughey’s (2008) critique of evolutionary biology, which suggests that men’s genetic programming triggers performances and thoughts linked to those of their prehistoric ancestors. McCaughey argues that “men’s desires are always performed in relation to the dominant discourses in circulation within their cultural life worlds” (p. 84). By focusing on universality, common sense, and humanity, students concentrate easily on “dominant discourses” or grand narratives without recognizing the tension that often arises from seeking to negotiate conflicting identities.

The evidence that the students provide for this argument draws from their own and possibly from their peers’ inability to identify the complexities of their own identities. When asked how a conversation about the straight white male perspective might proceed in class, Jay admitted, “I think it’s assumed that we already own three-fifths of the galaxy so it doesn’t really matter what we think because someone’s already said it for us.” Scott agreed, adding that “[i]t’s not so much to do with race but with frustration. Maybe everybody feels like that, like everyone’s taking a piece from them without reflecting.” As Scott and Jay suggest, dominant discourses define their identity and strip them of agency. In fact, they seem to find difficulty delineating the competing yet integrated discourses that construct their identities. In the same group, Adam carried that conversation further. When asked how they compare to Rushin, who maintains multiple identities (woman of color, feminist, churchgoer, former hippie, separatist, artist), Adam claims that his is simple: “I may have had other identities, like I was in the Boy Scouts for eight years, but now it’s not at the forefront, so it doesn’t affect me in the way that other people see me.” Adam sees himself as a blank representative of humanity: faceless, voiceless, and superficial, the opposite of the

postmodern self functioning as the site of competing discourses. However, as we see above, these students do recognize that their corporeal and ideological identities, even their mere presence, can determine the direction of a class discussion because of their fear of retaliation and offense. They have decided that hegemonic cultural forces have determined their perspectives as straight white men and their peers’ perception of them because “someone’s already said it for us.”

Perspectives on Poetry II: Prying into Male and Female Sexuality

The shift from race to sexuality and relations with women reveals depths of curiosity and candid discussions about sexual intercourse. Such conversations among these students have never transpired in my mixed-gender classroom, which suggests that they feel more comfortable in a homogeneous social setting. Observe how this group reacted to the bawdy sexual imagery in Whitman’s “A Woman Waits for Me,” which, as James argues, details how “the birth of a strong nation begins with a strong man, a strong woman, and an ejaculation” in the following lines:

I pour the stuff to start sons and daughters fit for
These States—I press with slow rude muscle[. . .]

Through you I drain the pent-up rivers of myself,
In you I wrap a thousand onward years,
On you I graft the grafts of the best-beloved of
me and America,

The drops I distil upon you shall grow fierce and
athletic girls, new artists, musicians, and singers,
The babes I beget upon you are to beget babes in
their turn,

I shall demand perfect men and women out of my
love-spending,

I shall expect them to interpenetrate with others,
as I and you interpenetrate now,

I shall count on the fruits of the gushing showers of them, as I count on the fruits of the gushing showers I give now [...] (29, 32-39)

When asked where James sees evidence of an ejaculation, he and his peers note (and chuckle about) various substitutions (“pent-up rivers of myself,” “The drops I distil upon you,” “my love-spendings,” “gushing showers,” “the stuff to start sons and daughters”). At the same time, they argue that the poem insultingly reduces men strictly to their sexual functions. In Jay’s words, “He’s just reduced himself to a stud horse on a farm.” When asked for their reaction to a dwindling of male purpose, Scott avows that “I’m patriotic and everything, but I’d like to think I have more to offer than just getting girls pregnant.” The students interpret the language and diction as both waggish and discomfiting: reducing men to their reproductive functions dilutes any sense of a complex, multifaceted identity that they already deny or fail to acknowledge.

Strikingly, the students failed to notice Whitman’s understated misogynistic imagery. While they observe that women play an equal role in populating the country by giving birth to hardy Americans, the violence articulated by the persona during procreation resembles affection: “I am stern, acrid, large, undissuadable—but I love you, / *I do not hurt you any more than is necessary for you, [...]* / I brace myself effectually—I listen to no entreaties, / I dare not withdraw till I deposit what has so long accumulated within me” (27-28, 30-31, emphasis added). Alex minimizes the brutal imagery by drawing directly from the persona’s affirmation that “he says he loves her,” and Will replies, “They’re working together to make a population. It’s not like he’s forcing her,” apparently unconscious of these (sexually violent) injustices.

However, the discussion of Piercy’s “What Are Big Girls Made Of?” opened an intriguing rift. The poem emphasizes the dehumanization and mechanical construction of the female body, a trope inspiring con-

versations about the complicit roles of men and women who determine these physical dimensions and appearances, particularly in the following lines describing the eighteenth-century woman, which drew the most attention:

century of the ultimate lady
fantasy wrought of silk and corseting.
Paniers bring her hips out three feet
each way, while the waist is pinched
and the belly flattened under wood.
The breasts are stuffed up and out
offered like apples in a bowl.
The tiny foot is encased in a slipper
never meant for walking. [...]

Here is a woman forced into shape
rigid exoskeleton torturing flesh:
a woman made of pain. (23-31, 40-42)

While the students failed to grasp the oppression of women when a male persona acted as (sexual) oppressor in Whitman, they recognized the constraints on female beauty in Piercy possibly because they felt less culpable or because they could not perceive how men contribute to such anxiety. In fact, when I mentioned that Piercy’s persona may use the passive voice in these stanzas to argue that women fall victim to these fashion devices, Carter argued either for women’s activity or complicity, insisting, “No one forced them to crush their bodies like that. They did it themselves. And if it really was that uncomfortable, they wouldn’t have done it.” When asked about the persona’s perspective on contemporary women, he replied, “They run on treadmills and they starve themselves. We hear this crap all the time, but it’s their choice. The girls here obviously don’t do it.” Sadly, when Derek agreed, adding that “[a]ll the girls at this school are fat and I don’t want to go out with one,” he refused to acknowledge the idea that I posed: “Don’t take this personally, but it sounded like you said that women have to be in shape in order to be worthy of going out with you. Did I get that right?” His

response: “No, I just don’t want to go out with fat girls.” Carter and Derek’s observation of their educational and social environment admittedly stems from ubiquitous *YouTube* videos of overweight women in hilarious and humiliating situations (hula-hoops, cat fights, dancing, inebriation, in various states of undress, and so on), where the women serve only as objects of voyeuristic derision.

Taken together, my students overlook the misogyny in the Piercy in order to objectify women and overlook the violence toward women in the Whitman in order to complain about negative depictions of men. Such frank reactions to the poems suggest that their open and blunt conversations about male and female sexuality actually subsume the nuances attached to these discourses. In other words, my straight white male students undermine rather than interrogate each poet’s purpose, audience, and history as they (understandably) interpret each poem through the lens of their own social, historical, and political climate. But as they perform this reading, particularly in this environment controlled explicitly by straight white men, the discussion shifts from their expressed anxieties about marginalization to emphasize instead an understood male control over sexual situations without recognizing the social consequences of eroticizing violence and domination.

Perspectives on Poetry III: In the Contact Zone

As noted above, these students feel vulnerable to an onslaught of responses to their perspectives on race and gender, even from their instructors. As a result, they choose to internalize their criticisms and observations, as they admit during a private discussion of Hall’s “Safe Sex”:

If he and she do not know each other, and feel
confident
they will not meet again; if he avoids affectionate
words;

if she has grown insensible skin under skin; if
they desire
only the tribute of another’s cry; if they employ
each other
as revenge on old lovers or families of entitlement
and steel—
then there will be no betrayals, no letters returned
unread,
no frenzy, no hurled words of permanent
humiliation,
no trembling days, no vomit at midnight, no
repeated
apparition of a body floating face-down at the
pond’s edge (1-9)

After joking with one another about the definition of “safe sex” as avoidance of future contact with a partner from a one-night stand, Russ and Eric exuberantly admit that they know women who seek out anonymous sex. However, when asked if they would reveal this information to the women in class, Russ reveals a telling refusal to dialogue: “It’d probably just turn into a stupid argument about how guys are jerks and girls pretend they’re innocent victims. Completely unproductive blaming.” In other words, Russ would rather remain silent and safe than engage in a dialogue of divergent voices and viewpoints in the vein of Pratt’s (1991) definition of the contact zone: a rhetorical and social space where (ideally) cultures productively encounter and clash with one another.

Rather than owning their opinions and perspectives, these students refrain from negotiating the power differentials in which they participate, particularly in the classroom where, as they suggested at the beginning of the interviews, silence equals safety. As Tom admits when I asked about the potential for a full-class discussion of the poems, “Well, if there are girls in the class, we won’t be able to talk about them because they get mad and defensive.” The Piercy poem might pro-

vide a reprieve, according to Tom, because “They’ll say that men pressure them into looking good. They might say that other women do, too, but that would come out later.” The Whitman and Hall poems, however, must stay off of the syllabus because, as Dennis adds, “we’d better not tell them that it’s their responsibility to have kids or that we know that they just want casual sex sometimes. They have nails and’ll do more than scratch you if you make them mad enough.” The members of the other groups also revealed mild symptoms of gynephobia and even castration anxiety based on the sexual damage that women can inflict. Will openly announced that women “withhold sex” if angered; Eric explained that “women fight dirty by being frigid”; and James confided that women “tell all their friends when a guy makes them mad.” True, Aristophanes drew our attention to women’s sexual clout when he gave us *Lysistrata*; in the present, women continue to maintain a degree of social control over men. The company of students of other races has similar effects. When I asked the focus group participants if they would openly discuss Giovanni’s poem among their African-American peers, Adam explained it best when he replied, “I don’t want to say something that sounds racist when I’m not. Sometimes I don’t think about what I say and it comes out all wrong.”

Discussion and Implications

With these conversations in mind, we should consider how to fit these students into an expanding multicultural curriculum. Given the reliability of assertions about universal and timeless race, gender, and sexuality, and about a lack of agency and social control, a number of questions emerge about choosing course materials and about shaping assignments and class discussions that simultaneously enhance teaching and learning while validating the life experiences and philosophies of our straight white male students. Among many recent studies recognizing that the twenty-first cen-

tury system of education in the United States requires reconstruction and transformation (Acosta, Moore, Perry, and Edwards, 2005; Banks, 2007; Landsman and Lewis, 2006; Rothstein-Fisch and Trumbull, 2008; Spring, 2008; Ukpokodu, 2007), critical pedagogues correctly argue that accommodating diversity presupposes creating a multicultural curriculum as its central educational purpose.

English teachers like myself, for example, depend on the literary canon and the classroom as two of our scant outlets. Since academic transformations of the canon have expanded the lists of great works, and since the theories of postmodernism and post-structuralism have influenced how we read and teach these texts, those of us who are not heterosexual white male teachers often find inspiration in our personal political struggles to spar against the hegemonic discourses throughout the history of English and American literature. Perhaps at the basic level of literary character we might simply remember to acknowledge heroic straight white male protagonists such as amateur sleuths Walter Hartright in Collins’ *The Woman in White* and Robert Audley in Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret*; a reformed Arthur Seaton at the end of Sillitoe’s *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*; community builders Randy Bragg and Dan Gunn in Frank’s *Alas, Babylon*; or renegade firefighter and bibliophile Guy Montag in Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*.

But for us to be “critical pedagogues,” a next step involves considering how to teach our students about the ideological link between language and power. Perhaps the shift begins sociolinguistically as one means of constructing our gendered identities (Gee, 2008; Harmon and Wilson, 2006). In a classroom episode separate from these interviews, I led a discussion on gender differences and asked the women students simply to describe men (who were sitting among them). I ended up slathering the chalkboard with words such as “controlling,” “possessive,” “dirty,” “inconsiderate,”

“rude,” “egotistical,” and a number of expletives during an episode publicly reinforcing feelings of misandry. I followed with one observation and three questions. First, I reminded the students that I asked them simply to describe men, not to debase them. Second, I asked them to consider why they date men if they must endure such behavior, whether we can apply these same terms to women, and how they would have responded to a comparable series of misogynist remarks. Before continuing the conversation, I suggested that for social change to occur, these adults should begin to communicate on a more productive level, whatever that may entail; social engagement often involves social trust and a sense of support system reciprocity.

The derogatory terms that the women assigned to men (and, of course, vice versa) beg what Nelson (2001) calls a “counterstory,” or “a story that resists an oppressive identity and attempts to replace it with one that commands respect” (p. 6). These counterstories recognize the elements that construct oppressive master narratives about people or groups and retell these narratives by revealing morally relevant details excluded by the master narrative. Such a shift of interpretations of identities aims to alter both the oppressors’ perception of the group and the group’s perception of itself. We’re quick to identify the master narratives that situate women, people of color, and the LGBTQ community in ideological positions subordinate to those of straight white men, but master narratives or foundational myths compete with one another as well.

Conclusion

This study differs from other investigations into diversity in higher education because I devote my attention to the dominant group rather than restricting my research to how underrepresented groups fit into the dominant culture. Thornton and Jaeger (2008) argue persuasively that such an approach—an examination and evaluation of the institution’s current climate and

culture—may be the best way to lead to institutional change, an understanding of civic responsibilities, and an awareness of current strengths and weaknesses. With the appropriate data, institutions of higher learning may discover innovative strategies toward approaching civic responsibilities and social justice agendas but requiring less time and resources than the creation of new programs.

Sociologists, linguists, cultural critics, psychologists, and other academics and professionals have agreed about the complexities of identity construction among college students and other groups, that is, about the social and historical variability of gender, sexuality, and race. Furthermore, according to my student population, straight white men sustain, respect, and perpetuate hegemonic discourses of heteronormativity, whiteness, and masculinity by assuming the generality of their own philosophies and by challenging the ideological positions of women, other races, and other sexual orientations. These patterns of separation from and oppression of non-male, non-white, and non-heterosexual groups generally proceed from adolescence and into college (Chesler, Peet, & Sevig, 2003). However, these students do see the benefits of a multicultural education. As Pete reveals, “I don’t know if it’s the English teacher’s responsibility, but there should be diversity introduced at some point, and it seems that English is the easiest class [in which] to do that.”

What Jameson claims about ruling-class literature seems to apply to patriarchal cultural production as well. According to *The Political Unconscious* (1981), consciousness on behalf of the oppressed classes, expressed, “initially, in the unarticulated form of rage, helplessness, victimization, oppression by a common enemy,” generates a “mirror image of class solidarity among the ruling groups....This suggests...that the truth of ruling-class consciousness...is to be found in working-class consciousness” (pp. 289-290). Similarly, according to my discussions with these focus groups, the “truth”

of patriarchal consciousness depends precisely on the delineation of the victimized heterosexual white male. The paradox is such that male solidarity entails granting expression to these feelings of rage tempered by the politically correct suppression of drives to subordinate competing groups.

Although this study produces more questions than answers, I hope that a productive conversation and new research will emerge from this analysis. What we want to avoid is inflicting individual guilt onto these students for being heterosexual, white, and male. Indeed, our students often resist easy categorization as they demonstrate alienation, invisibility, and vulnerability and appear to find comfort in an essentializing humanity. They also suggest that everyone needs exposure to a multicultural education, which means including this population as well without demanding that they compromise their deepest cultural values. While we seek to include straight white men as allies, we should unflinchingly become their allies as well. —

Notes

¹ Readers can find the full text of each poem at the following locations:

Rushin's "The Bridge Poem" on the ASWAT Web site <<http://www.aswatgroup.org/english/gallery.php?article=19>>.

Giovanni's "Nikki-Rosa" on the AfroPoets Web site <<http://www.afropoets.net/nikkigiovanni2.html>>.

Whitman's "A Woman Waits for Me" on the Poets.org Web site <<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/16095>>.

Piercy's "What Are Big Girls Made Of?" on the PoemHunter Web site <<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/what-are-big-girls-made-of/>>.

Hall's "Safe Sex" on the Poets.org Web site <<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/19213>>.

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Justice for Undergraduates: Teaching Law and Literature in the Liberal Arts Curriculum

Sara D. Schotland

Abstract

Law and literature has become a staple in the course offerings of American law schools, but it remains a rarity in undergraduate curricula. This article advocates the inclusion of law and literature in English, humanities, freshman composition, and other liberal arts courses. Students enthusiastically engage in discussion of questions that matter related to social justice, the death penalty, and criminal law. Stories that describe the experience of minorities with courts and legal codes provide a valuable vicarious opportunity to learn about the effect of legal institutions on less visible members of society. The author provides examples of how she weaves themes of law and justice into the teaching of canonical literary texts, and offers practical suggestions for professors who lack formal legal training to facilitate their preparation of a syllabus and lesson plans.

Keywords

law and literature, justice, curriculum

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Introduction

Today many law schools include in their curriculum a “law and literature” course in which law students read fiction related to themes of justice, trial procedure and legal ethics (Gemmette, 1995a; West, 1996). However, such a course is much less frequently taught at the undergraduate level. Based on my experience in teaching undergraduates at Georgetown University in the Liberal Studies B.A. program, I believe that there is a strong case for integrating law and literature into English, humanities, and interdisciplinary courses. I illustrate my teaching strategies using three texts: Susan Glaspell’s “A Jury of Her Peers,” Herman Melville’s *Billy Budd*, and Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*. I also provide teaching tips and suggest how professors who lack legal training can introduce law and literature themes into their lesson plans. I conclude with a brief theoretical discussion of the contribution that law and literature can make to the consideration of vexed policy issues.

Why We Should Engage Undergraduates in the Study of Law and Literature

At the outset, let me clarify that when I speak of weaving a discussion of law and justice topics into the teaching of literary texts, I am not referring to fine points of legal procedure. Unless one is teaching a course on nineteenth-century legal history, the niceties of long-discarded chancery procedure at issue in *Bleak House* are of little interest to law students, much less to undergraduates. However, the fundamental problems raised by Dickens—delays in the justice system, litigants who become obsessed with their cases, unequal access to courts, unethical lawyers who milk their cases and fail to consult their clients' wishes—remain relevant and are well worth discussing.

The focus of my “Law and Literature” course is on law in literature—fictional treatment of legal themes in literary texts—not law *as* literature, reading literary texts as if they were literature (that is, approaching legal texts by methods of literary interpretation). That latter topic seems more appropriate to a law school curriculum. I focus on the overlaps in and tensions between justice in the sense of moral rightness and justice in the sense of positive law (the enactments of the state as set forth in codes, procedural rules, and court decisions). Judge Richard Posner (1988), one of the deans of the Law and Literature movement, has explained, “what literature speaks to are the eternal problems of the human condition” (p.357). Study of law and literature exposes students to the benefit of varied views on questions of justice and the law, questions of vital concern to college students and any thoughtful member of a polis. For instance:

- » Under what circumstance is it acceptable or even obligatory to disobey an unjust law? (Sophocles’ *Antigone*)
- » What is the proper role of mercy in administration of the law? (William

Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, *Measure for Measure*)

- » What is the impact of custom and authority in establishing legal norms? (Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery”)
- » What is the role of confession in healing guilt? (Katherine Anne Porter’s “Noon Wine”)
- » What is the role of the community in administering or resisting the imposition of punishment? (Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, Katherine Anne Porter’s “Maria Concepción”)
- » Should a criminal’s disadvantaged background mitigate his punishment? (Richard Wright’s *Native Son*)
- » Is capital punishment ever justified? (Oscar Wilde’s “Ballad of Reading Gaol”, William Wordsworth’s sonnets on capital punishment, and Wright’s *Native Son*)
- » Under what circumstances is one justified in taking the law into one’s own hands and out of the formal legal system? (Susan Glaspell’s “A Jury of Her Peers”)
- » In time of war and urgent threats to national security, should the executive have greater latitude in adjudication and punishment? (Herman Melville’s *Billy Budd*)
- » What are the limits of aggressive cross-examination for a lawyer at trial? (Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*)

Some scholarship justifying inclusion of the study of law and literature in the law school curriculum is not directly relevant to the teaching of undergraduates, because it is focused on developing lawyers who write better, think better, or are more likely to uphold high professional standards in ethical representation (Domnarski, 2003; White, 1995; Weisberg, 1993; Posner, 1988; Ferguson, 1984). However, I believe that Robin West’s (1996) argument applies to liberal

arts students, that the study of law and literature is important to shed light on ignored injuries, such as the oppression of women who suffer in silence from domestic violence. West (1996) carries the torch for “invisible victims”: non-heroic, non-villainous “real people” suffering from serious but invisible injury (p. 257). Marjorie Camilleri (1990) explains that through the subject of law and literature we can gain an unparalleled vicarious exposure to the lives of minorities and social “others” and the impact of the justice system on their lives:

Literature ... rises above partisan interests and brings into public discourse insight as to the moral commitment of the whole community... Because literature communicates moral insights within the context of a story about particular people, it can bring to public attention the particular plight of the politically enfeebled, marginalized, and neglected segments of society. In this way, literature at once speaks for the many and for the few. (p. 562)

Examples of Lesson Plans

The best law and literature texts invite open-ended discussion: they present ethical choices that admit of no easy answers. Susan Glaspell’s 1912 short story, “A Jury of Her Peers,” provides an ideal text. A sheriff’s wife (Mrs. Peters) and her friend (Mrs. Hale) go to Minnie Wright’s farmhouse because the sheriff is investigating Minnie’s alleged murder of her husband. Minnie has been arrested and jailed, but the sheriff is concerned that without evidence of motive he may not be able to get a conviction. While he searches the house for clues, he patronizingly tells his wife and her friend to wait in the kitchen. There the two women discover evidence of Minnie’s harsh, cold life and of the emotional abuse that her husband inflicted upon her. Soon they find the motive for Minnie’s murder of her husband: John Wright had wrung the neck of Minnie’s pet canary,

the one joy in Minnie’s lonely life. In sympathy with Minnie’s ordeal, the women conceal the corpse of the bird. Thus the women operate as a jury of her peers, in effect exonerating Minnie so that she does not have to stand trial. This fictional situation is based on an actual trial that Glaspell covered as a cub reporter.

We can use this text to discuss under what circumstances the withholding of evidence from the authorities would be morally justified or jury nullification would be ethical. A jury effectively nullifies a law when it declines to convict—and thereby acquits—a defendant who would have been convicted if the jury had applied the letter of the law. Feminist scholars have touted the action taken by the sheriff’s wife and her friend as an example of constructive female bonding. The women’s clever and intuitive action makes a mockery of the sheriff’s patronizing remarks that the women wouldn’t know a clue if it stared them in the face. Moreover, the sheriff’s wife and her friend make a caring intervention on behalf of a helpless female defendant at a time when women were outsiders to the legal system. In 1912, women were ineligible for jury service. Neither the fictional Minnie Wright nor the real-life defendant Margaret Hossack would have been tried by a jury of her peers. Despite these factors that would appear to justify the women’s action, the morality of the women’s actions is not so clear. They committed an outright obstruction of justice by destroying evidence. This very short story can be squeezed onto any reading list, and always elicits thoughtful and animated discussion. Students readily appreciate the implications of jury nullification for eroding the trial process.

I organize this lesson plan around a series of questions: What are the differences between the real-life Hossack trial and Glaspell’s story? How do Glaspell’s changes affect the reader’s response to Minnie Wright and the women’s decision to hide the evidence of the murdered bird? I want the students to see that this is a story of multiple victims, as well as multiple points of

view. We hear the story of Minnie Wright's marriage and the life stories of Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale, but John Wright's narrative is suppressed. What happens when we take the law into our own hands by withholding evidence? I invite the students to consider the consequences of decisions to bypass the court process by citizens who are personally sympathetic to a defendant. How do we determine when a system is so fundamentally unjust that it seems appropriate and morally right to obstruct official authority? Although there is no trial in Glaspell's story, class discussion of "A Jury of Her Peers" logically leads to the question of the role of citizen jurors and the exceptional circumstances that may lead a jury to disregard a judge's instructions and prevent the verdict that would otherwise occur. Students tend to differ in their reactions to some prominent examples of jury nullification which are considered alongside the text: the refusal of a Washington, D.C. jury to sentence the defendants who broke into Dow Chemical's headquarters to protest the company's manufacture of napalm, and the more recent instance of the acquittal of former D.C. Mayor Marion Barry of charges of using cocaine, apparently because the jury believed that he had been unfairly entrapped.

Through law and literature themes, we can revitalize Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, which students may otherwise dismiss as a dated text involving an outmoded and improbable punishment. I ask the class to consider the role of the community in administering the state's criminal laws. How does the community contribute to, or undermine, the hegemonic purpose of punishing transgression? Many students are surprised to learn that Hester's punishment may have been far more lenient than alternatives that were available. As Laura Korobkin (1997) points out in a reading infused with careful legal historical research, Hester benefited from the magistrates' leniency and avoided the death penalty. The liveliest part of the class discussion occurs after we close the book and turn to the question of whether we

shame criminals today. The initial student reaction is that shaming is a bygone punishment that has no continuing relevance. However, we discuss contemporary instances where shaming punishments have been advocated as solutions to crimes that have resisted conventional sanctions. We consider two examples: First, in the case of recidivist drunk drivers, is it appropriate for a judge to order repeat offenders to fix a decal to their license plates? When a New York trial judge required that a recidivist drunk driver apply a label to his license indicating a "convicted DWI," the New York appellate court regarded this as humiliation and reversed the sentence for lack of empirical evidence that shaming is effective. *Letterlough v. State*, 655 N.E. 2d 146 (N.Y. 1995). However, two Florida appeals decisions upheld sentences by trial judges requiring that drunk drivers post bumper stickers on their cars and publish a notice with a mug shot describing the offense. *Goldshmitt v. State*, 490 So. 2d 123 (Fla. App. 1986); *Lindsay v. State*, 606 So. 2d 652 (Fla. App. 1992). Although some civil libertarians oppose shaming punishments because they constitute public humiliation, others who seek effective and economical means to deter intractable crime may be more receptive to this method. Second, we consider whether laws that require registration and/or community notification of the residence of sex offenders are warranted to protect children, or represent a breach of the convicted offender's privacy.

Melville's *Billy Budd* is another example of an older text revitalized through consideration of its legal themes. One of the central interpretive issues is our evaluation of Captain Vere, who notoriously executes Billy in summary fashion, despite grave reservations about that punishment. I ask the students to consider the text from a variety of perspectives. These include not only traditional symbolic readings such as Gail Coffler's (1991) and contemporary deconstructionist interpretations, such as that of Barbara Johnson (1980), but also law and literature readings by scholars who focus on

the ethics of the actions taken by Captain Vere, such as those offered by Richard Weisberg and Judge Posner. For Richard Weisberg (1984), the summary trial was vitiated by a series of errors in the convening of the drumhead court (among them, the fact that Vere rushed to try Billy when he should have waited to rejoin the squadron and referred the case to the admiral). Judge Posner (1987) argues, on the other hand, that it is easy to criticize Vere's action in hindsight but his summary decisions fell within the zone of reasonableness for a captain in time of war facing the threat of mutiny.

We gain an appreciation of the problems Vere faced by considering America's varying responses to national security threats. During World War I, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld, despite a First Amendment challenge, the conviction of individuals who published leaflets advocating that people resist the draft: "When a nation is at war many things that might be said in time of peace are such a hindrance to its effort that their utterance will not be endured so long as men fight and no Court could regard them as protected by any constitutional right." *Schenck v. United States*, 249 U.S. 47, 52 (1919). In one of its most ignominious decisions, the Supreme Court approved the round-up of Japanese citizens during World War II. *Korematsu v. United States*, 323 U.S. 214 (1944). But recently the Court has taken a far dimmer view of detention of terrorist suspects in the name of national security. Then-President George W. Bush and the Defense Department imprisoned terrorist suspects at Guantanamo in hopes that the reach of *habeas corpus* would not apply. However, in a series of decisions, the Court has found that detainees can challenge the legality of their detentions. There is a close nexus between Vere's concern to take prompt action against mutiny in a time of war and the current debate over how to strike the right balance between fears for national security and concern for individual rights and liberties.

Some Thoughts on Theory

While a detailed discussion of the theoretical implications of studying law and literature is outside of the scope of this paper, some discussion of current theoretical debates may be useful. A cultural approach to the study of law recognizes that law reflects and reinforces deep-seated cultural attitudes. The law is not merely a coercive force that operates to affect behavior, but also a lens through which we view the world and conduct social reactions. Austin Sarat (1999) and his followers apply a cultural studies analysis to policy questions such as whether the death penalty should be abolished. Sarat follows Albert Camus in seeking to incite public outrage against the death penalty by encouraging public executions. He argues that when the state kills behind closed doors, it masks the horror of the death penalty, soothing citizens into ignoring the atrocity. Paul Kahn (1999) argues in *The Cultural Study of Law* that scholars should resist engaging in normative inquiries about political reforms. Kahn argues that the independence of this discipline is compromised if the scholar takes up the project of legal reform or becomes a participant in legal practice. The point of contention between Kahn on the one hand and Sarat on the other is whether cultural analysis is a reliable tool for providing normative guidance in practical policy debates.

The issue of whether to abolish the death penalty provides a compelling case study for evaluating the promise and limitations of cultural study of the law. College students, like many other citizens, are deeply troubled by the morality of the death penalty—about discrimination in implementation, about the risk that innocent defendants may be executed, and about whether or not the empirical evidence shows capital punishment to be a deterrent. Manassah Dawes and many other eighteenth-century lawyers and political theorists advocated the elimination of the death penalty on the basis that it was a barbaric and ineffective sanction. In contrast, writers Henry Fielding and

William Wordsworth advocated capital punishment on the basis that the terror of the example of execution could save countless other lives. I remind students that Fielding was a Bow Street magistrate. Whether or not they agree with his views, he was informed about the causes and prevention of crime.

While attention to law and literature cannot answer the ultimate question of whether the death penalty should be abolished, this pedagogical focus can be a useful tool to help us visualize the effect of public policy choices such as Sarat's proposal that executions be publicized.

The eighteenth century has left us a legacy of extravagantly visual accounts of hanging day at Tyburn. We have eyewitness reports, fictional accounts, and William Hogarth's pictures. These various visual and written texts help to illuminate the possible consequences of televising executions, for instance. Then, as now, the goal of execution was to reinforce normative values of retribution and deterrence. However, histrionic performances of the victims subverted hanging day. When a victim appeared deeply penitent, execution would appear barbaric and repressive. On the other hand, the rite of execution was equally undermined when notorious criminals on the way to the gallows joked, drank, and gave the mob three cheers. Writing about the carnival atmosphere at Tyburn, Fielding (1751/1988) complained that "the day appointed by Law for the Thief's Shame is the Day of Glory in his own Opinion. His procession to Tyburn, and his last Moments there, are all triumphant..." (p. 167). The close of *Jonathan Wild* describing the hanging of an infamous thief, enables us to visualize the consequences of televising executions today.

...When he came to the tree of glory, he was welcomed with a universal shout of the people, who were there assembled in prodigious numbers to behold ... the proper catastrophe of a great man. (Fielding, 1743/2004, p. 175)

Wild's last defiant act is to curse the crowd, then, "with universal applause," he "swings out of this world" (p. 176).

Public execution exercises an irresistible attraction. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell (1949/1990), Mrs. Parson's children complain that they have missed the hanging:

"They're disappointed because they couldn't go to see the hanging, that's what it is. I'm too busy to take them and Tom won't be back from work in time." "Why can't we go and see the hanging?" roared the boy... "Want to see the hanging! Want to see the hanging!" chanted the little girl.... (p.23)

Now as in the past, publicizing executions would elicit a variety of reactions: public titillation, sympathy for the murderer, or blasé indifference. It is not at all clear that sensational displays will end up achieving the goals of either proponents or opponents of capital punishment. By imagining the consequences of laws and legal practices, students gain a different and a deeper perspective on urgent legal and social questions and the policy alternatives available to address them.

Teaching Tips

In preparing my syllabus, I try to achieve a balance between canonical and contemporary work and incorporate contemporary works by African-American, Latino, and/or Asian writers. I include poems, plays, short stories, and novellas to arrive at a manageable reading list. If professors find it impractical to include *Crime and Punishment* or *Bleak House* on their syllabus because of their length, I suggest that they consult Elizabeth Gemmette's (1995b) useful anthology of short stories with law and literature themes. Several useful syllabi and related resources are available (Solove, 2009. <http://docs.law.gwu.edu/facweb/dsolove/Law-Humanities/index.htm>; Heald, 1998). I tend to favor works with trial scenes, which inevitably add thematic

and dramatic intensity. But there is good reason to include works like Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* which show the injustice that occurs when there is no legal remedy. A variety of research tools are available to facilitate preparation of law and literature classes. In addition to internet searches, it is easy to access electronic databases, LEXIS(R) and WESTLAW(R), which provide full text of law reviews on every conceivable legal topic.

Largely because Hollywood has long savored the drama of the trial scene, a cornucopia of films can be used to enrich the teaching of law and literature. These include, for example, *The Merchant of Venice* (Radford, 2004), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Mulligan, 1962), *Billy Budd* (Ustinov, 1962), *Bleak House* (Chadwick, 2005), and *Noon Wine* (Fields, 1985). I show 20-30 minute clips from each of these films in class. After viewing the trial scene in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, I ask the class to comment on the ethical issues raised by Atticus Finch/Gregory Peck's masterful cross-examination of Mayella Ewell, who falsely claims that Tom Robinson raped her. Of all the texts that I include in the course, this is the one whose moral message is ostensibly the most obvious. Yet the devastating treatment of Mayella, the embodiment of "poor white trash," invites reconsideration of the consequences of trenchant cross-examination of rape plaintiffs, not only for the woman and her family but also for other victims who may be prevented stepping forward through intimidation.

Conclusion

Focusing on law and literature serves a variety of objectives: it stimulates students to think about important, often intractable, questions of justice and ethics; it relates classic texts to contemporary legal problems; and it enlivens discussion because law, justice, and public policy questions are so engaging to students. I encourage college professors to take the plunge. ■■

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Connecting Communication Theory to Interviewing Practice: Strategies for Instruction and Evaluation

Lauren Mackenzie

Abstract

In an effort to extend students' knowledge of communication theory to a practice they will be faced with both during and beyond their college years, I developed the interview/cover letter/resume assignment. This assignment not only connects theory to practice, but it also connects students to faculty in a way that helps develop their written, verbal, and nonverbal communication skills. In this article, I begin by discussing several communication theories that work to assist students with the interviewing process; I continue by suggesting interviewing and resume resources that can be used in the college classroom by instructors of any discipline; and I conclude with an overview of the assignment which includes a sample evaluation tool and company research checklist.

Keywords

Interpersonal communication theory, interviewing skills, resume and cover letter writing, nonverbal communication

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Introduction

It becomes more apparent to me with every semester I teach how consumed my students have become with finding employment after the completion of their college careers. Especially, in these times of economic uncertainty, I sense my students' appreciation of anything I do in the classroom that could ease their transition into the working world. This is not always an easy task, however. Those of us who teach theory to undergraduates often find ourselves seeking out new and applicable ways of using class time to meaningfully engage our students in the material at hand. That being said, I have had exceptional student feedback regarding the interviewing assignment that I created for my Human Communication course. The report based on this particular course and assignment was developed during the Spring 2009 semester when I was teaching at Fitchburg State College in Massachusetts.

Recently, communication textbooks such as *Real Communication* (O'Hair & Wiemann, 2009), *Applied Mass Communication Theory* (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009), *In the Company of Others: An Introduction to Communication* (Rothwell, 2010), and *Interpersonal Communication: Relating to Others* (Beebe

et al., 2008) have included segments dedicated to helping students through the interviewing and resume writing process. This article and my accompanying assignment suggestions are designed to complement these readings and assist professors with the task of combining theory and practice in the college classroom.

The development of this assignment was my attempt to extend students' knowledge of communication theory to a practice they will undoubtedly be faced with both during and beyond their college years. This assignment not only connects theory to practice, but it also connects students to faculty in a way that helps develop their written, verbal and nonverbal communication skills. In this article, I begin by discussing several communication theories that work to assist students with the interviewing process; I continue by suggesting interviewing and resume resources that can be used in the college classroom by instructors of any discipline; and I conclude the article with an overview of the assignment which includes a sample evaluation tool and company research checklist.

Using Communication Theory to Inform Interviewing Practice

How, then, can communication theory help to guide our students in their quest for improving their interviewing and resume writing skills? Although there are many areas within the diverse field of communication that could provide insight into this question, for the purpose of this class (Human Communication), I focused on interpersonal communication theories and concepts that students had already learned in my course. Specifically, I guided students in their thinking about interviews as conversations (i.e., Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), the concept of "nexting" (i.e., Stewart, 2006), as well as nonverbal cues and "thin slicing" (i.e., Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993). I will provide an explanation of how each was used to contribute to the overall assignment in the paragraphs to follow.

One of the over-arching themes of my interpersonal communication class draws from the words of Susan Scott in her book *Fierce Conversations*. Her statement that our work, our relationships, and our lives succeed or fail "one conversation at a time" (2002, p. 1) is central to the way I approach teaching communication in general and conversation analysis specifically. My students were able to see Scott's writing come to life as I introduced the interview assignment and we began to discuss the idea of an interview as a conversation with a purpose.

In their book, *Analyzing Social Settings*, Lofland and Lofland (1984, p. 59) talk about the interview as a "guided conversation" in which the interviewer is soliciting information from the interviewee to determine whether or not the interviewee is a good candidate for the position and the interviewee is able to determine whether or not the position is a good fit for him/her based on the conversations within the interview. When students consider the interview as a sort of co-constructed conversation that everyone involved can get something out of, it can re-frame (thereby creating new and alternative understandings) the whole experience and help reduce nervousness about the process. Additionally, drawing from Fontana and Frey's (2000, p. 663) suggestion, the interview can also be thought of as a "negotiated text" that goes more smoothly if both parties are prepared and contribute to the best of their abilities. Although the study of conversation sometimes comes as a surprise to students (they often tell me it is something too ordinary and common to study academically), this assignment provides a welcome opportunity for me to remind them that the most influential communication events of our lives are conversations (Shotter, 1993; Stewart, 2006). If they want to improve the quality of their lives, they must look seriously and specifically at the study of conversation. In the case of this course and assignment, I reiterate that the interview is a conversation and that if they want to improve

the quality of their lives (with a better job, for instance) then they must prepare for the job interview by working to improve the quality of their communication and conversations.

One of the most important aspects of communication and conversation, according to Stewart (2006) is a skill he calls “nexting.” He defines this term as “doing something helpful next, responding fruitfully to what’s just happened, taking an additional step in the communication process” (p. 31). This can be applied to the job interview process when students come to understand that no matter how bad things look (if they haven’t been happy with their previous responses to the interviewer’s questions thus far, for example), they always have the option of attempting a “next” step. It can be an empowering realization for students who have been dreading going on job interviews because they may have felt as though they had no control over the communication situation. Stewart maintains that no *one* person determines all the outcomes of a communication event, and that all parties collaborate to help the conversation reach its full potential. This idea draws from the work of Buber (whom we have discussed earlier in the semester) and the insight that it is through dialogue and conversation that we can improve our relationships and our lives. Once students begin to conceptualize the interview process as a conversation in which they play an active role, they will not be deterred by previous difficulties in the conversation, but instead will focus on the potential they have to make the interview a positive experience by taking the next step.

However, as most of us who have participated (on either side of the table) in the job interview are well aware, there is more to the job interview than verbal communication. The study of nonverbal communication and “thin slicing” (Ambady, 2000, p. 203) provides very useful suggestions for students preparing for the job interview. That is, we are able to make decisions and “size-up” (Stewart, 2006, p. 176) people within

seconds of meeting them. Research over many decades has shown that people are able to form fairly accurate impressions of others from mere glimpses of their behavior (Goffman, 1979; Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992; Carrere & Gottman, 1999; Gladwell, 2005; Houser et al., 2007). “Thin slicing” in particular, is defined by Ambady as “a brief excerpt of expressive behavior sampled from the behavioral stream” (2000, p. 203). Students are often intrigued when I describe Ambady and Rosenthal’s (1993) study titled “Half a Minute: Predicting Teacher Evaluations from Thin Slices of Nonverbal Behavior and Physical Attractiveness.” As the title suggests, the results of this study reveal that participants who were shown six-second video clips of a teaching performance rated that teacher almost the same as a student who had known that same teacher an entire semester. The findings of this study suggest “first that our consensual intuitive judgements might be unexpectedly accurate, and second, that we communicate – unwittingly – a great deal of information about ourselves” (p. 440). I then connect the findings from this study to the interview scenario. I suggest that students not only think seriously about what they wear and how they greet the interviewer (with direct eye contact, a firm handshake, and so on) in those first seconds of the meeting, but I also suggest that students use the results of this study to prepare a polished response to the commonly first-asked interview question: “So, tell me about yourself.” If this first question is answered in a creative and impressive way, it can lead to the all-important (according to Ambady et al., 1992, 1993, 2000) favorable first impression.

Preparing Your Students and Yourself for the Assignment

I found O’Hair and Weimann’s (2009, pp. 485-518) segment on interviewing in their textbook *Real Communication* to be extremely useful in terms of preparing students for the interviewing process. The text

provides a sample cover letter and resumes as well as tips on online resources to help prepare students for the job search. Their overview of the many forms and functions that interviews can take is thorough and makes for some interesting classroom discussion. In addition, after surveying several local college and university career center Web sites (i.e., Fitchburg State College, University of Massachusetts, Clark University) I found seven online resources to be particularly useful for guiding in-class discussions about resume and cover-letter writing and the interview process. They can be found in Table 1 below.

These Web sites will answer most questions any instructor would have regarding the job search and all that it entails. Even if you can't devote the class time to review these websites, you could list them on your assignment sheet or ask students to review several of them after doing the assigned textbook reading and bring their questions to class. I found these Web sites to be very useful resources for helping me to prepare students to succeed in this assignment and, of course, in their job search.

In addition, O'Hair and Weismann (2009, p. 485-518) provide a list of some of the most commonly asked interview questions, which I will summarize here:

- » What led you to choose your particular field?
What do you like about it? What don't you like about it?
- » In which kinds of positions are you most interested? Summarize your qualifications for the position.
- » Have you had summer employment or a volunteer position in this or a related field that you didn't mention on your resume?
- » What have you learned from previous work experience?
- » What are the most important considerations for you in choosing a job?

- » What kinds of courses have you taken that you think prepared you for this occupation?
- » Why are you interviewing with our company?
- » What do you see yourself doing five years from now? What are your long-range goals?
- » What have you done that shows initiative and willingness to work?
- » Do you have any hobbies or interests that are related to this career path or position?
- » What would you say is your strongest attribute? What is your weakest point?
- » Can you tell me about a time you worked through a difficult coworker situation?
- » What can you contribute to our company that would make us want to hire you?
- » Are there any questions you want to ask?

I incorporate these questions into the assignment by asking students to choose three of the fourteen questions listed above and to write a well thought-out and detailed response to each. On the day this assignment is due, each student is paired with another student from the class, and they simulate the interview experience by practicing their oral response to the three interview questions they have chosen. The partner who is doing the interviewing then fills out a peer evaluation form rating the interviewee's responses, and the students switch roles. This enables students to practice their verbal, nonverbal, and active listening skills in class after they have submitted their written assignments (resume, cover letter and written responses to the three interview questions they have chosen), having had the opportunity to demonstrate a wide variety of communication skill sets that they have developed throughout the semester.

WEB SITE	WHAT IT OFFERS
www.quintcareers.com	Career Tool-Kit (cover letters, resumes, networking, interviewing, salary negotiation, career tests, and quizzes)
www.gradprofiles.com	This Web site features in-depth graduate and professional school profiles with information about degree requirements, facilities, research opportunities, expenses, and financial aid
www.salary.com	Enables users to research salaries by job title and geographical location. Includes salary related articles and news. Many links to local and national job search pages
www.jobhuntersbible.com	Author of <i>What Color is Your Parachute?</i> created this internet guide which includes comprehensive and well-categorized web links to various job sites and other career topics
www.jobhunt.com	A meta-list of on-line job search resources and services.
www.jobweb.com	Sponsored by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, this website is geared particularly toward recent graduates. Job Web offers career information, job postings, and employer information
www.overseasjobs.com	Information about international job hunting, immigration, and resumes

Table 1: On-line resources for job hunting, resume writing, and interviewing

The Interviewing, Resume, and Cover Letter Assignment

This assignment has several components designed to familiarize students with the verbal and nonverbal aspects of the job search. On the day I distribute the one-page assignment sheet (see Appendix A), we also review the reading from O'Hair and Weismann (2009) on the different forms and functions of interviewing. The students are asked to use the templates provided in the reading to structure their resume and cover letter (but I am flexible, especially with our graphic design students, who often lean toward a more creative format) and they are asked to choose three interview questions from the list above to prepare verbally and in writing.

At this point, I have also begun to speak with faculty in the department to coordinate a day when at least three can attend my class and contribute to a roundtable discussion on suggestions for interviewing and resume/cover letter writing. Ideally, this discussion would also include any alumni whom you might invite to visit, as well as any practitioners (non-academic) in the field. Of course, this involves a bit of advance preparation and a positive relationship with former students who can speak in an informed way about their job search and what they learned in the process.

Once the day is set for their classroom visit, I ask them to think of some personal experiences and tips to share with the class. I organize the discussion with PowerPoint slides. After we've discussed the information on the slide, I ask the faculty to elaborate with personal examples, and I open the floor for student questions. Some sample titles of the slides on that class day are "Too Much Information" (this reminds students to keep their email addresses, voicemail greetings, and Facebook pages appropriate for employers who may contact them), "Repetition" (this suggests that students think of creative action verbs for their resumes and interview conversations), and "Nonverbal Communication" (this reiterates the importance of turning cell phones off, dressing for the jobs they

want, and so on). I found this day of class to be the most enjoyable of the entire semester. Not only are students given valuable information on the job search from people who have been through many themselves (as both interviewer and interviewee), but the interaction between students and faculty was encouraging and respectful. In my experience, students were most vocal about many faculty members' suggestions to have two things memorized before the day of the interview. First a "sound bite" that explains what a communication (or other) major entails and why they chose this major. Second, faculty suggested that students should memorize at least one question to ask the interviewer. All faculty that participated in my roundtable discussion agreed that when a potential employer asks, "So, do you have any questions for me?," it is a *must* for students to demonstrate that they have put time and thought into this position and are genuinely curious about it. One suggested question that many students told me they would ask in future interviews is, "How is good work rewarded?" Overall, student feedback on this assignment and the discussions leading up to it reflected appreciation for these two particular questions which, many said, they otherwise never would have thought to prepare in advance.

The next class day is devoted to research on the target graduate school or company of the students' choice. I put together a checklist for each (see Appendices B and C) and asked students to bring their laptops on this day so that they could use the class time to do research and add detail and depth to their cover letters and interview responses. This is also a good time for me to remind students that they should not be sending out 25 "generic" cover letters to various organizations after graduation. Each cover letter and resume should be tailored to a specific organization where they would like to work; students can do this by researching and including specific information in the

first paragraph of their cover letter that speaks to why they would be a good fit for *this* particular job.

As stated at the end of the previous section, on the day that the students submit the written portion of the assignment (one-page resume, one-page cover letter, and three pages of responses to the three interview questions they chose) they also participate in the interview process, working in pairs and filling out peer evaluation forms (see Appendix D) during and after their partners' responses to the interview questions. I urge students to take this seriously, of course, and ask them to maintain eye contact and exchange firm handshakes as they introduce themselves to their partners at the start of each interview. Once all students have practiced being both the interviewer and interviewee, I suggest they ask their partners what their weakest response (of the three) was and then formulate a new response using feedback and suggestions made by their partner on the peer evaluation form. Once all students have completed this, I collect the forms and attach them to the written portion of the assignment.

The assignment in its entirety was the highlight of my semester and I continue to think about how I can improve it in the coming months for my future students. Although I realize that this in-class assignment is not a novel idea (in fact, most professors I know do whatever they can to allow time for discussion of the job search in some way, shape, or form), I hope that the checklists, evaluation templates, and assignment guidelines I have provided, combined with up-to-date websites will complement the work that is already being done by professors to help their students prepare for the job market. For those professors who do not currently include an assignment such as this in their courses, this article will serve as a pre-packaged, researched and tested example of how this process can be incorporated into the classroom. I think those who choose to implement an assignment such as this will agree that the connection of theory to practice, of

students to faculty, and of *one* class to students' overall post-college job search serves to highlight the relationships that, for many of us, make teaching and learning so meaningful. ■■

Appendix A

Resume/Cover Letter Assignment

Professor _____

Due: _____

I. COVER LETTER (20 points)

Your next major graded assignment for Comm __ is due __. For this assignment, please research a “target” job or graduate school program that you would like to apply to after graduation. Then, using the *sample format* of the cover letter from your “Competent Interviewing” reading, write up a one-page cover letter indicating your interest in the job/graduate school. Your letter should include the following:

1. Why you are interested in the position (Do your research on this school /company and explain how you AND they will benefit by you being there)
2. What makes you qualified for the position (Mention your most relevant work/educational experience & explain why this job/school is a good fit)
3. Correct format and NO spelling or grammatical mistakes

II. RESUME (20 points)

Your resume can be formatted however you like (a sample resume can be found in the “Competent Interviewing” reading), but please adhere to these guidelines:

Your name & contact info should *stand out* at the top of the resume

Include *at least* the following information:

- » Objective
 - » Education,
 - » Work experience
 - » Special skills/activities
 - » References
3. Keep it to one page (double sided with back page listing THREE references – personal, professional, academic), 12-pt font, 1-inch margins

III. INTERVIEW (10 points)

This portion of the assignment will be delivered in class on __. Please choose THREE sample interview questions (from pg. 512) that you will prepare to answer on __. Type out a one-page (single spaced) response to each question Type out the 3 questions on a piece of paper to give to your partner You will be assigned a partner in class who will interview you and write up an evaluation of your responses (you will do the same for your partner). Your written evaluation will be turned in to me at the end of class

IV. TOTAL POINTS

You will receive full credit if, and only if, you follow all the instructions listed above. You should hand in FIVE (single spaced) pages in addition to the peer evaluation on __ This assignment will be worth __out of a total __points for the course.

Appendix B

Company Research Checklist

COMM _____ Interview Assignment

1. Company name _____

2. What are their products and/or services? _____

3. When was it founded? What is the history of its founder? _____

4. What is its mission statement? _____

5. What is its organizational structure? Who is president or CEO? _____

6. Where are the locations of this company (main and branch)? _____

7. Does this company conduct informational interviews? Could you set up a meeting to talk to an employee about this company? _____

Appendix C

Graduate School Research Checklist

COMM _____ Interview Assignment

1. School name _____

2. What are the required courses? How many classes are taken per semester? _____

3. Who is the chair of the department to which you are applying? _____

4. What is the cost of the program? Is there funding available? _____

5. What are the professors' areas of expertise in this department? _____

6. How long does it take students to graduate, on average? _____

7. What are the average class sizes? What is the student/faculty ratio? _____

8. Is there an internship or thesis requirement? _____

Appendix D

Peer Interview Form

Your name _____

Interviewee's name _____

Questions	Comments
Did she/he provide adequate answers to all questions? Note inadequate answers.	
Did he/she appear genuinely interested in the position?	
Did her/his answers reflect any research/preparation?	
Was he/she confident?	
What 3 adjectives would you use to describe this candidate?	
What are your observations concerning her/his nonverbal communication?	
Would you hire her/him? Why yes/no?	
Additional observations	

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La Nouvelle Cuisine Française: A Case Study in Active Program-Building

Kirsten Halling and Marie Hertzler

Abstract

Employing metaphors from French cuisine, this article details successful strategies for reviving moribund academic programs and transforming them into chefs d'œuvre. The authors give their own tried-and-true recipes for creatively combining academic innovations, adjunct mentoring, extracurricular activities, pro-active student advising, and service learning opportunities to produce responsible, engaged, and professionally active students. Mindful that academic programs cannot thrive in a bubble, the authors promote the benefits of community outreach and articulation between high-school and university classrooms, key ingredients in the program's growth and reputation.

Keywords

French program, articulation, extra-curricular, service learning, outreach

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I. A New Context for French Programs:

Mijotons des idées (Brewing up some ideas)

Expressing the Problem: M'aider (May Day)

In 2000, the French language program at our university began a new strategy for program-building. That year, there was a total of one major and two minors in French. By 2007 the number had grown to thirty-five declared majors and thirty minors, and the commencement ceremony saw twelve majors and fifteen minors proudly march to receive their B.A. degree. At last count, in the Fall 2008 academic quarter, there were forty-six declared French majors and more than thirty minors. How did this program expansion come about? What ingredients were combined to bring such stunning growth? Four major areas together provided the necessary chemistry to turn a navet (a turnip, a flop) into a delectable *Charlotte*: faculty engagement with students, student participation in learning through service, curricular diversity and innovation, and program outreach. Our intention in writing this paper is to help other academic programs in distress by explaining how we were able to define the obstacles facing our profession at large and how we turned the

tide by showing our discipline as a relevant and vibrant field with concrete applications in today's global society.

By the year 1999, advanced-level courses in French were so woefully under-enrolled that the administration was seriously considering abandoning the French major and turning the program into a service wing for the department and the College of Liberal Arts. A proposal was on the table to limit French offerings to the five required quarters of language courses necessary to fulfill the language requirements for graduation. The French Club was generally inactive, holding one or two poorly attended meetings a year, conducted in English. The rare activities planned were not designed to promote French, but involved charitable activities with little or no academic component. Upper-level conversation classes routinely counted a mere five or six students, and the only advanced courses offered were traditional literature classes and independent reading classes. Among the diminished faculty, French was suffocating from a mixture of top-down management, curricular traditionalism, and an inattention to the Francophone diaspora, combined with a feeling of resignation in the face of the growing popularity and importance of Spanish in the United States.

Targeting Weaknesses: On ne fait pas d'omelette sans casser des œufs (You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs)

Whether or not we want to admit it, teachers in the humanities must understand that we can no longer afford ourselves the luxury of "just" teaching; we must take all available opportunities to market our programs, tirelessly justifying why our classes are worthwhile. Somewhere in the last thirty years, liberal arts studies have become synonymous with elitism and impracticality, so it is incumbent upon us to break the mold.

A second preconception is the idea that high schools do their thing and universities do another. Recognizing that excellent high-school teaching directly feeds our college programs, the French fac-

ulty in our department began contacting area teachers in 2000, offering them development opportunities for their students and for themselves. At present, we offer an annual French immersion day, *La Journée d'immersion*, for high school students, and an annual pre-service French immersion day for teachers. In addition, through state language associations, the French faculty participates in and organizes annual development opportunities in the fall and spring, presents at local conferences and submits articles and materials to statewide publications and blogs. Subjects presented at local conferences include a wide range of useful and contemporary topics presented most often in French so that teachers have the opportunity to speak French with peers as they try out exercises and gather pedagogical materials to use with their students or as they discuss the literary and cultural aspects of each year's French Book Club novel. As a result, French teachers know to contact us when they need help with advocacy, educational materials, continuing education courses, letters of recommendation, and the like. In addition, they have begun sending us their top students as a matter of course.

Bumps in the Road: Des grumaux dans la pâte (Lumps in the batter)

Progress in French program development has by no means been smooth, as we have faced down budget cuts that have resulted in hiring freezes and course reductions, anti-French sentiments in the wake of France's refusal to support the proposed U.S. invasion of Iraq, the development of the less-commonly taught languages at the expense of "traditional" European languages, part-time faculty woes, exhausting administrative responsibilities, lack of support for faculty replacements during sabbatical leaves, and unexpected enrollment problems at the intermediate level. While it is impossible to whisk away these impediments to growth, we have found that outreach and advocacy can

help administrators rethink the cutting of programs when they can expect good returns on their investment.

II. Faculty Engagement with Students

Advising: Souvrir l'appétit (Whetting the appetite)

As our program has grown, we have recognized the fact that every student enrolled in or expressing a desire to enroll in our French courses has a direct impact on the success of the program. Rather than seeing advising as a burden, we understand it as an opportunity to collaborate with our students, develop a plan of study that makes sense to them, troubleshoot obstacles to their success, encourage study abroad, and confer about post-graduation job searches or graduate school applications. Over the years, we have found that our “personal approach” is deeply appreciated; it has kept at-risk students on track and increased retention in the major and minor. Our students leave our offices with a computer print-out of their degree plan, which is updated during regular advising appointments. By contrast, students in other majors have expressed frustration with uncommunicative and reluctant advisors because they are left to navigate through general education requirements, transfer credit issues, and determine the proper chronology for taking courses in the major.

As in many American universities, most freshmen matriculate directly into an academic advising center that helps first-year, transfer, and non-traditional students make the transition into college life. Once students are accepted into our university, they are assigned general advisors who follow them until their sophomore year, when they are accepted into one of the specialized colleges. Until recently, the advisors gave standard recommendations to all freshmen: take all your general education courses as soon as you can and apply to the appropriate department for your intended major; then and only then should you fulfil your foreign language requirement. This uninformed strategy did a disservice to students in three ways. If they had com-

pleted one or more years of a foreign language in high school, they had, by and large, forgotten much of it by the time they took the language placement test one to three years later. Low placement meant the students started at a lower level and therefore had to spend more time and more money meeting the language requirement. Starting the language requirement during their sophomore, junior, and, yes, even senior year meant that they risked scheduling conflicts that would postpone graduation. Beyond this, the advice created long-term repercussions: students were not aware until too late that they could have minored or double-majored in a foreign language and therefore added to their future professional competency and attractiveness to potential employers. By working with the Freshman Year Advising Liaison we are now able to educate the advisors, who in turn provide valuable and timely advice to incoming students: maximize your high school language training by enrolling in college language classes immediately. Over the next four years, those freshmen who discover their potential or renew their enthusiasm for learning a language are able to add a valuable qualification to their job market portfolio.

Another innovation from which our Modern Languages Department as a whole has benefited is the new policy of granting “ungraded” credit hours for pre-college language study. In other words, students who take and pass higher beginning or intermediate-level language classes with a C or better may buy credit for courses below that level at a lower tuition rate. This policy encourages students to challenge themselves rather than simply take French, German or Spanish 101 for an easy “A.” This also means that our beginning classes are usually filled with true beginners because those with a background in a foreign language often take advantage of the “credit buyback” program.

Since most academic advising begins in the classroom, we take every opportunity to reach out to students in our classes, regularly advertising French Club

events, promoting the benefits of a minor or major in French, and publicizing study abroad programs. On the first day of classes, we distribute a survey in which students tell us about their background in foreign language and respond to questions about their hobbies and interests, their projected career path, and how they think a foreign language will benefit them in the future. We use this information to personalize classroom activities and to target students with an expressed interest in higher-level language studies. Before and after class we make ourselves as available as possible to students so that their inquiries about continuing beyond the intermediate level receive our immediate attention and enthusiastic response. In addition, we facilitate the administrative process when students wish to declare a minor or major in French; we take the forms to class, then collect and deliver the completed applications.

Breaking down affective learning barriers is a necessary and important component to student achievement and to program-building. Accordingly, we generally require individual oral interviews at the beginning and end of each academic quarter. During the first two weeks in many of the lower-level classes, students meet individually with their teacher for “fifteen minutes” to share their goals for the quarter and how they plan to meet them. This provides the opportunity for student and teacher to establish a rapport with each other outside the classroom. This office chat lays the groundwork for students to feel at ease contacting the professor outside of class.

III. Student Participation

Extracurricular Opportunities: Il faut faire bouillir la marmite (Bringing the pot to a boil)

In 2000, when enthusiasm, support, and prospects for the French program were being thrown out with the *déchets* (garbage), we decided to embrace *la différence Française* (French cultural distinctiveness) and begin the preparations for a program that would in time com-

bine the sumptuousness of *Babette's Feast* (Axel, 1987) with the bravado of *Ratatouille* (Bird & Pinkava, 2007). This meant restocking the French Club pantry with ideas, enlisting as many of our students of French as possible to staff the kitchen, and finding willing administrative staff to help in a myriad of ways. The first thing we did was to sign up all Francophiles or potential Francophiles. Accordingly, the French Club became the center of operations. Since we ran all our activities through the French Club, our student members took on an active role in planning and executing events. Thus we savored together the *mets* (delicacies) that we had jointly prepared.

The French Club offers faculty the opportunity to further develop relationships with the students. There are two faculty advisors assigned to the club, and the other instructors who are not advisors attend meetings as well. The French Club plays an important role in developing the perception of what French speakers are and can become. Officers are active in planning meetings that engage students on issues important to them. Not only do the students benefit from the topic presentations, but they increase their oral and aural skills in French as they interact. We include French Club activities on all French course syllabi, and offer enrichment points to participating students.

Annual French Club Activities: Préparer une sauce blanche (Making a Béchamel)

Each year, we build our schedule for the French Club around a number of annual events. We begin by asking officers and members to participate in the University's “Move-in Day” for freshmen, during which we wear our French Club tee-shirts and pass out informational flyers while driving golf carts and helping students move into their dorm rooms. Next, the Department of Modern Languages holds its annual chocolate-tasting during Freshman Orientation, where we contribute French or Francophone-origin chocolate and serve tiny pieces to the students, who rate each

brand according to criteria we give them. Once the academic year officially begins, we have a week to get ready for “Fall Fest,” a university-wide event where student clubs set up information booths. We make ours as attractive as possible, with interactive activities (cool French phrases to impress your friends) and small prizes (engraved pencils or buttons) for recruitment and visibility purposes. Officers collect students’ e-mail addresses for our distribution list and Facebook page, which are used to publicize events and meetings throughout the year. During the fall quarter, we nominate French Club members for Homecoming Court positions, organize and run *la Journée d’immersion* for high school students, and send care packages to our students studying abroad. In winter and spring, we celebrate Mardi gras and plan activities for the year-end “May Daze,” which gives us another opportunity to recruit members from the University at large.

La Journée d’immersion: Le bain (marie) linguistique (Immersion day: Steeped in language)

One of the fall quarter highlights for French Club members and students of French is the opportunity to help plan and participate in French Immersion Day, held in conjunction with National French Week. In Fall 2008, we hosted a record-breaking 187 high-school students, to the satisfaction of University administrators who see our event as a golden recruitment opportunity. Our advanced students use their language skills by leading campus tours in French, sitting at tables with high school students, giving presentations, supervising group activities and games, distributing materials, and performing skits. That year we incorporated our beginning and intermediate students into the mix, as well. They performed the lower-level language tasks needed to greet the high school participants and lead them individually to assigned tables. They were the Francophone countries’ flag-bearers for our opening “ceremony” and helped set up and clean up the venue at the close of the event. Throughout the day, high-

school students witness first hand the enthusiasm and talent of their college counterparts, ask them questions, and imagine themselves in their place. No lecture by a professor could equal these impromptu discussions on the latest trends in music and fashion and stories of recent study abroad experiences. No *Youtube* posting could equal the witty, culturally based situation-comedy sketches. No music video star could rival the live music performed by our French Club co-president.

Planning New Club Activities: Enrichir et épicer la sauce (Thickening and spicing-up the sauce)

The preceding annual activities comprise the base for the year’s schedule, and French Club officers and members decide how to spice up the rest of the year. Additional Club activities are determined by a combination of student interest and the various opportunities for French practice and promotion that come to our attention. Since our university has a healthy international student population, we often hold receptions for French-speaking students on campus, giving our students a chance to connect with native speakers from all over the world. Other activities include: building a French mascot sculpture for auction at a charity event, painting a logo on the University’s “club wall,” teaching French to a Girl Scout troop and videotaping a student-run cooking show. Student interest is particularly high for events such as *la Soirée gabonaise* (Gabonese Mixer), *la Soirée cinéma* (Movie Night), dinner at a professor’s house, dinner at a French restaurant, a *crêpe* festival and a trip to a local university to visit a French graduate program. The two most highly attended club meetings in Fall 2008 were a presentation about career opportunities for translators and interpreters at the United Nations and an innovation on the standard *soirée cinéma* fare, renamed *Dîner-ciné*: a potluck dinner with French food, *naturellement*, followed by a movie.

Other projects currently in their planning stages include organizing a “Welcome Back” reception for students who spent the fall in France and a Claude Berri

film festival, with Berri's films and thematic berry desserts and drinks. Senior French majors are also working on various Senior Thesis projects with a performance component. For instance, we will be performing plays on campus and at local high schools. In addition, two of our students are writing songs that they will record with the help of the Center for Teaching and Learning. The French Club is planning the party to celebrate the finalized CDs, which will be copyrighted and donated to area French teachers for classroom use.

Learning through Service: La Cerise sur le gâteau (The icing on the cake)

In addition to planning and running Immersion Day, our students have numerous opportunities to participate in mutually beneficial service activities in French. The French Club provides tutoring for beginning and intermediate language students, a service that has succeeded in attracting these students to Club meetings. In addition, we pre-approve a plan of study that offers credits to students who volunteer at high schools to present lessons or to assist area teachers. Students may also enroll in four separate one-credit hour, 300-level "Applied Elementary Language Teaching" courses once they have reached an advanced level of study. In this sequence, students attend a beginning French class for a given amount of time, work one-on-one with students in group work, provide tutoring outside of class, present a cultural or grammar lesson, assist the teacher, keep a journal and write a summary of their experiences in French.

Service learning can take place on or off campus, and even outside the country. Our students have been placed in local high schools with French-speaking international students who need translation or interpretation help. Students have also given French lessons to community groups and at summer camps. On the international front, our French professors are designing short-term Francophone "Ambassador Programs" with a service-learning component. One instructor devel-

oped an annual book project with an elementary school in Paris, and another is developing a service project in Gabon, Africa, where students will deliver school supplies to an orphanage and barter lodging at a local boarding school for English lessons. A third project in Francophone Canada and Louisiana is in its exploratory stage.

IV. Curricular Diversity and Innovation: *Chacun à son goût* (to each his/her own)

Best Practices: Mettons-y notre grain de sel. (Putting in our two cents)

Given that student-centered interactive learning strategies have considerably more success than lecture-only class formats, instructors across the disciplines must use a variety of communicative teaching methods that target the whole student. By incorporating small group work, student presentations and other hands-on training into the classroom, teachers allow students to discover and practice new skills and knowledge rather than to "absorb and regurgitate" information.

In our French classes, we teach language in a cultural context, integrating elements from many academic fields, such as journalism, creative writing, literary analysis, music, theatre, visual arts, cultural studies, philosophy, religion, speech and debate, history, political science, geography and cinema. In addition, instead of focusing lessons on grammar in a vacuum, we design activities with concrete applications in the real world. For instance, we combine French language studies with the development of technological skills that give our students improved marketability. Students create promotional pamphlets, produce movies, record music, communicate with keypals, design Web sites and blogs and craft PowerPoint presentations, thereby breaking down the traditional classroom walls. This pedagogical approach sensitizes students to cultural nuances and produces graduates who are capable of navigating an increasingly global society.

Oral and Aural Assessment: Mettons les petits plats dans les grands (Putting on a big spread)

End-of-quarter assessment of oral and aural skills acquisition takes place at all levels, in every language, phonetics, and conversation class. This is, in many aspects, the traditional final oral interview in which students speak one-on-one with the professor in the target language. However, we have injected this capstone exercise with novel themes so that students approach the preparation with a measure of excitement and leave the interview feeling encouraged and empowered. These positive feelings go both ways, and teachers enjoy sharing in the students' creations and getting to know them better as individuals. In beginning classes, students are given a set of topics based on themes, vocabulary, and grammar covered, and sample questions to practice prior to the interview, which sometimes focuses on a photo album that each student tailor-makes prior to the end of the quarter. Students practice talking about their photos with classmates who in turn practice asking questions. At the official interview, student and teacher both engage in conversation through the medium of the photo album. This communicative activity with a purpose often lessens the anxiety for students and minimizes the test-like feel of the interview.

Intermediate students are given more complicated tasks. For one recent activity, students had to make a telephone call to their teacher for the purpose of renting an apartment in Paris. Since there was just one apartment available, the activity was presented as a friendly competition. For extra credit, they could also leave a message on the answering machine to show just how much they wanted to rent the apartment and why they were the best potential renter. Excitement grew as they waited to hear who was chosen to rent the apartment, and many students forgot their timidity as they used their best French to vie for a room with a view in the City of Lights.

Advanced Conversation final interviews are designed with the same kind of interactivity. In one advanced language course, students were given a detailed role to play in a murder mystery, and met with *le commissaire* Maigret to explain their alibis and denounce other suspects.

Proficiency: L'ingrédient de base (The basic ingredient)

All our courses are taught in French, without exception. English usage is kept to a bare minimum, even in the introductory classes. In order to make this immersion style of teaching palatable to our students, we use distribution lists, Web sites, WebCT (Blackboard) and other communication tools to send introductory e-mails to our classes in which we explain our teaching methodology. We supplement class instruction with regular e-mails updating students on expectations and assignments, thereby eliminating the students' fear that they are "missing something." What we have found is that students rise to the challenge if we believe in their ability to learn in a French-only environment. Of course, we meet resistance in the beginning of class, but our evaluations prove that the students end up enjoying the excitement of learning to swim in the target language.

Course Development: Mise à jour du livre de cuisine.

Pas de recettes minceur! (Updating the cookbook: no diet recipes!)

The media-saturated environment that our students know best can be used as one of our strongest recruitment tools. Rather than holding to canonical literature as the standard for course development, we decided to add film and popular culture courses to our curriculum in order to appeal to today's visual learners. The film classes we now regularly offer combine the study of *le septième* [the seventh] art with history and culture. The courses on our books include: "Déjà vu: l'Américanisation des films français" (The Americanization of French films), "Prises de vue: Visions

de collaboration et de résistance" (Film Shots: Visions of Collaboration and Resistance in Occupied France), and "*Portraits de l'enfance dans le cinéma français*" (Portraits of Childhood in French Cinema). In addition, a bilingual course on the history of French cinema is being offered in the fall, much to the delight of film buffs in our program and the Department of Motion Pictures.

In our department, conversation and composition courses are taught separately, but follow complementary themes, thereby giving students a chance to develop and hone particular skills. Popular culture, politics and cultural issues are woven into lessons on traditional grammar and expression to keep them contemporary and exciting. For instance, students study grammar, sentence structure, specialized vocabulary, history and culture in the context of the musical *Le Roi Soleil* (Ouali, 2006) or while critiquing the film shorts in *Paris, je t'aime* (Assayas, 2006).

Composition courses teach advanced grammar and expression through translation, music, film, *abécédaire* (alphabet book) and brochure creation, radio spots, i-Movie narratives, and essays based on service-learning experiences. One year, composition students created brochures promoting our university, our French section and our study abroad programs. The previous year, their pamphlets focused on grammar explanations, complete with contextualized exercises and an original story. Student i-Movie projects represent the culmination of a unit on storytelling. The fairly simple visual narratives are based on a series of at least twenty photos, a voice-over narration, sound effects and transitions. Another composition course incorporated service learning, working with high-school students of French and ESL students from Francophone countries. For this course, the students wrote papers combining reflection about each school visit with targeted grammatical concepts.

Conversation courses based on cultural competency have been a great success as students develop

their ability to communicate about current issues. From one small group of five students in 2000, we have grown beyond the stated class capacity of fifteen students; in 2006 there were thirty-two enrolled in two sections, and 2007 saw thirty-nine (seventeen and twenty-two) enrolled in two sections. In 2000, the five students filmed interviews with area Francophones; the interviews were edited and became the basis for a video and a course packet that were distributed to high-school teachers. The following year, twelve students interviewed twelve more Francophones to create more teaching resources that were sent to area high schools and used for subsequent courses. Topics addressed in these videos included politics, food, cultural stereotypes, immigration, careers, and geography. In addition to vocabulary and comprehension exercises, the previewing, viewing and post-viewing activities relied heavily on student experience and perceptions, as well as their interpretation of the interviewees' responses. Thus, the primary pedagogical material (the video) was real and contemporary and the interactive activities were reflective and meaningful. Since the project was so successful, our Spanish and German programs adopted the strategy, and produced their own video projects, each with a unique cultural perspective.

Training Adjunct Faculty: L'Importance des sous-chefs dans les brigades de cuisine (The importance of a well-trained kitchen staff)

As in the case of many language departments, we employ part-time instructors to teach lower-level courses. As such, we make a concerted effort to provide these colleagues with as much support and recognition as we can give. We begin the year with an adjunct professor orientation, during which we give teaching and technological demonstrations and distribute and discuss a handbook that anticipates and answers most of their questions on procedure. Since one of the major complaints from our part-time instructors is that they do not feel that they belong to the faculty, we spend

time at the adjunct orientation meeting building a sense of community. One year we provided dinner for twenty-eight part-time instructors, and last year we received a grant to provide gift certificates for supplies from our school store as an expression of our gratitude. We encourage part-time faculty to contact language section heads with any questions relating to teaching, and we honor all problems, concerns and inquiries.

Once per quarter, full-time faculty observe adjunct instructors and share constructive feedback with them. In addition, we encourage our part-time colleagues to attend professional development workshops offered by our Center for Teaching and Learning and to conduct mid-quarter formative evaluations. We include them in textbook selection committees and give them a vote in adoption decisions. We invite all adjunct instructors to French Club events, and have inducted the best instructors into our chapter of the National French Honor Society. In our department, intellectual property-sharing among professors is highly valued and encourages and enables further development of pedagogical materials. To reduce our part-time French instructors' workload, we provide them with a fully written syllabus and a CD with activities, PowerPoint presentations, ideas for presenting vocabulary and grammar, sample tests, dictations, and quizzes.

V. Program Outreach

On-campus Visibility: M'as-tu vu? (Look at me!)

In addition to the French Club and Department events previously mentioned, we keep French in the news. Our publicity is not limited to a simple distribution list; we use sidewalk "chalking," the Club's Facebook page, language association listserves, original tee-shirts and buttons—"Je suis cool", "Je kiffe [love] le français"—and French fare at the campus dining hall during National French Week. We showcase our students' work by entering their creative projects in the College of Liberal Arts Undergraduate Symposium,

and every year our students win top honors for these projects. Students' original French language poems and their English translations have been featured in the English Department's creative writing publication. We regularly submit photos and articles about our events to University publications, local newspapers and language association newsletters. Our university's president and administrators have a standing invitation to the annual French Immersion Day and *la Soirée gabonaise*. We are also increasing visibility by applying for grants, competing for awards, and nominating our students for academic distinctions. Our French program won the Ohio Foreign Language Association's 2008 award for Outstanding Program. One of our teachers successfully competed for a full-year sabbatical and received a seed grant to set up an international service learning program; another was chosen as a yearlong fellow in the University's first Faculty Learning Community on Service Learning. One of our students was named to the College of Liberal Arts Leadership Institute. Another student, who is blind, received a grant to help fund her study-abroad experience and provide funding for a student companion.

Area and Regional Visibility: Tout est dans la présentation (The eyes feast first)

An added benefit of strong articulation between high-school and college programs is that the college students are often called upon to interact with high-school teachers and students. Not only does this type of community engagement or civic service reflect well on the college students' résumés, but it creates an essential and youthful connection for those high school students considering a future major or a minor in the humanities.

French Immersion Day provides us with a way to share our program with advanced French high-school students in an entertaining and stimulating event that doubles as a highly visible recruitment opportunity. Among the activities that are placed in each participat-

ing student's folder are informational brochures. Our "Tip Sheet for Incoming Freshmen" offers sound advice for translating high school French study into college credit and enabling immediate enrollment into college language courses.

While outreach events—immersion workshops for teachers, presentations at state language association conferences, participation in area French and Francophone sister-city programs, regular National French Honor Society inductions, and French Club functions—are important, it is equally essential to promote and publicize them in language association publications, local newspapers, and school newspapers. We make sure to appoint at least one student to photographic duty during Club events, and get short press releases out as soon as possible so as to keep them relevant and timely. Such efforts may seem self-serving, but professionally active high school teachers also benefit from articles and pictures they can keep in their files for program promotion purposes.

VI. Nurturing a Growing Program

Sharing the Wealth: Le diner est servi. À table! (Dinner's on!)

As our program becomes more visible and is increasingly recognized on campus and in the region, support from the College of Liberal Arts and the University administration continues to grow. We have strategically aligned our program with the mission of the University, which keeps us on task. Now more than ever we must highlight our successes and the benefits the study of French language, literature, and civilization provide to our students and the region.

Taking Inventory, Planning for the Future and Enjoying the Fruits of our Labors: La Dégustation (Taste-testing)

As our student numbers grow, we are able to document our need for additional full-time and part-time colleagues in French. Since our low point in 2000,

we have doubled our full-time faculty and increased our course offerings, and we hope to make a case for more resources in the near future. With a larger program come more complicated administrative issues, and to better manage our growth we have incorporated a monthly program meeting in which the full-time teachers examine a variety of important issues. Recent discussions have focused on: (1) reaching students who require special attention, such as those who are gifted in language or those who may have recurring difficulties; (2) encouraging student involvement in extracurricular activities; (3) planning study-abroad programming that includes re-entry workshops on reverse culture shock; and (4) providing workshops on career and graduate opportunities for language students. Ideas we will be considering in future planning meetings include a common reading text in French and an SOS program in which upper-level students mentor beginning students. We keep our eyes open for ways in which we can enhance our program. After learning about a free service offered by our university, we have begun offering Supplemental Instruction (SI) for beginning and intermediate students in need of language help. Our qualified upper-level students earn a salary and build their résumés by attending lower-level classes and giving group tutoring sessions.

We want to continue to find more ways to generate cohesion among our students, enthusiasm for French, and a feeling of mutual responsibility for our French program. Our upper-level students frequently interact with elementary and intermediate French students in the context of classes or extracurricular events, acting as coaches, tutors, conversation partners and role models. It is often exactly this kind of connection that fosters the enthusiasm necessary for declaring a French major or minor. More importantly, it is by listening to our students and soliciting their creativity and energy that we have kept our ideas fresh and our approach youth-centered. Though they are very busy—a large

percentage of them work an outside job concurrently—with their studies—want meaningful involvement that will enhance their relationships and career possibilities. Moreover, our students appreciate the trust we place in them, and view program-building as a team effort.

There are programs in many different disciplines suffering from the same types of problems that we have experienced in French. While professors may feel at times that it is not their duty to carry out administrative responsibilities and to provide extracurricular activities for our students, the proof is in the pudding. With creative collaborative energy and personal investment, college programs targeted for the chopping block can be resuscitated and invigorated. Some of the ideas we present may not be suitable for all academic disciplines, but we hope that they will stimulate personalized and original recipes adaptable to other programs and circumstances. *Bon appétit!* —

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Current Clips & Links

A list of links to interesting, non-commercial websites related to teaching and learning. *Currents* invites reader recommendations and will assume responsibility for seeking permissions as necessary.

1. Vanderbilt Center for Teaching Podcasts: As part of efforts to broaden and encourage the sharing of pedagogical strategies and techniques, the Vanderbilt CFT presents an expanding series of podcasts with discussions and interviews on topics ranging from time-efficient teaching and use of technology in the classroom, to feminism and race in a globalizing curriculum. Each podcast includes relevant links for further study and investigation.

<http://blogs.vanderbilt.edu/cftpodcast/>



2. The Science Education Resource Center at Carleton College: With links to Teach the Earth, and Pedagogy in Action, in addition to numerous other valuable

and inspiring projects, SERC seeks to improve education by promoting educator development through collaboration and innovation. Although the name of the organization highlights its foundation and roots in the sciences, its resources can be applied across the disciplines.

<http://serc.carleton.edu/index.html>

Science Education Resource Center @ Carleton College

3. National Center for Case Study Teaching in Science: The use of case studies, stories with an educational message, to facilitate understanding and advancement of contemporary issues in science, represents a new application of an old pedagogical technique. The NCCSTS has championed this method with award-winning results and promotes the use of case studies in science pedagogy, by providing access to an immense wealth of resources.

The NCCSTS has championed this method with award-winning results and promotes the use of case studies in science pedagogy, by providing access to an immense wealth of resources.

<http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/projects/cases/case.html>



4. Case It! Case-based learning in biology: A collaborative project presented by University of Wisconsin, River Falls, *Case It!* is a National Science Foundation sponsored project facilitating case-based learning in molecular biology using downloadable computer simulation software, and promoting online collaboration via a web editor/conferencing system. Links are provided to instructional PowerPoint presentations and software tutorials in addition to case-based examples of the software applications.

<http://caseit.uwrf.edu>



5. The Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning: hosted by Dartmouth College, the Consortium supports the development of curricular materials for languages spanning our global community. It is dedicated to foreign language pedagogy as a means of strengthening the discipline as well as preparing students for careers in international politics, business, and scholarship.

<http://consortium.dartmouth.edu/>



From the Book Review Editors

Catherine Wilcox-Titus and Matthew Johnsen

The Book Review Editors at *Currents* welcome inquiries about writing reviews of books addressing all aspects of teaching and learning, including both classics in the field and more recent publications. For planning purposes and in the interests of balancing each issue, please do not send already written reviews before contacting us. We would also like to hear from anyone who is interested in becoming a regular reviewer for *Currents*.

Address all inquiries to Catherine Wilcox-Titus, cwilcoxtitus@worchester.edu or Matthew Johnsen, matthew.johnsen@worchester.edu.

Higher Education's Hidden Economy: An Indispensable Critique of the Knowledge Industry

Kim Emery

How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation. By Marc Bousquet, with a foreword by Cary Nelson. New York: NYU Press, 2008, 304 pp., \$23.00 (PB), ISBN: 978-0-814-79975-8.

As the California Faculty Association (<http://calfac.org/index.html>) points out, “Faculty working conditions are student learning conditions.” Now Marc Bousquet has gone one better, explaining in excruciating and illuminating detail how institutions of higher education increasingly exploit not just faculty, but also students, and not only graduate teaching assistants, but undergraduates, as well—while serving the processes of teaching and learning less and less effectively. In her foreword, Cary Nelson, current president of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), identifies Bousquet’s new book as “the single most important recent advance in our understanding of the structure of higher education” (p. xiii). For college and university teachers who are concerned that the meaning of what we do is conditioned in part by the context in which we do it, *How the University Works* is an indispensable resource.

The corporatization of higher education degrades the educational experience in several ways. The commercialization of research into “intellectual property” raises concerns about the intellectual independence of faculty funded by private enterprise and also about the concentration of funding into support for readily profitable products. The commodification of instructional materials into prepackaged courseware, notes, and video lectures construes learning as an empty exercise in the memorization of dead facts, rather than live engagement with unsettled questions and the creation of new knowledge. It also works hand-in-glove with the so-called “casualization” of instruction: the rapid increase in adjunct, term-contract, and graduate-student teaching—and the precipitous drop in tenure-stream positions.

As founding editor of *Workplace: A Journal for Academic Labor* and author of *The Politics of Information* (2004) and *Tenured Bosses and Disposable Teachers* (2003), Bousquet is well positioned to address these issues. He has published widely on the structure of work within higher education and also has long experience on the front lines of academic labor organizing. An activist in the Graduate Student Caucus in the 1990s, he now serves on the AAUP’s National

Kim Emery is Associate Professor of English at the University of Florida and the author of *The Lesbian Index: Pragmatism and Lesbian Subjectivity in the 20th-Century United States*. Past-president of the UF chapter of the United Faculty of Florida and a long-term member of its bargaining team, she is currently completing a book on Queer theory and the corporate university.

Council. In *How the University Works*, Bousquet brings together the lessons of practical experience and the insights of scholarly reflection. In six chapters of highly accessible and frequently gripping analysis, he outlines an understanding of the economics of higher education with serious consequences for the practices of teaching and learning. Helpfully, the two chapters most readily adaptable to the undergraduate classroom are available online, along with other print and video resources, via Bousquet's informative website: www.marcbousquet.net.

The book's substantial introduction treats an array of interrelated topics over the course of 50-plus pages. Although Bousquet draws here from several separate pieces previously published, the full significance of his analysis is evident only in the context of their interconnection. Here "the social engineering of faculty culture" (p. 13) is revealed to be the intentional effect of specific management strategies; the kind of job-market analyses touted by professional organizations such as the Modern Language Association are shown to perpetuate the worst kind of sham; the legal history of the National Labor Relations Board is discussed in detail—and all are rigorously examined for their specific connections to the exploitation of students and teachers at every level of higher learning. Although challenging in its reach and range, this chapter is critically important and not difficult to read. It concludes with a discussion of graduate-student and contingent-instructor organizing that is somewhat encouraging. If necessary, this chapter could stand alone as an introduction to Bousquet's ideas in a classroom or seminar setting.

Subsequent chapters are more focused, often elaborating some particular strain of the introduction. Chapter Two treats the "informal economy" of what Bousquet calls the "Information University," while Chapter Three pursues his illuminating investigation of management theory. Chapter Four will be of par-

ticular interest to undergraduates and those who teach them, as it offers an important and original analysis of the surprising extent to which even undergraduate students function as flexible labor from which higher educational institutions and private enterprise draw profit, often in partnership. Here Bousquet details the shocking story of an arrangement between Louisville-area institutions and UPS advertised as "Metropolitan College," which is not a college at all, but essentially "little more than a labor contractor" (127). Students are enticed into signing agreements to serve as cheap "part-time" labor, in the middle of the night, in exchange for educational benefits most do not last long enough to see. Many are injured on the job, performing heavy lifting under difficult conditions. Although the Louisville example is especially egregious, Bousquet argues that undergraduate labor is systematically exploited nationwide, as "UPS is just one of thousands of employers large and small whose business plans revolve centrally around the availability of a workforce who primarily consider themselves something other than workers." The list includes colleges and universities themselves, who engage in "internal outsourcing" through work-study arrangements and other on-campus employment, even using undergraduates as teaching assistants in some cases (146-147). Students accept work that is "part-time" (even if performed more than 40 hours per week), non-permanent, and under-compensated in hopes that education will enable them to escape, eventually. Arguably, this arrangement contributes to an ideological association of service and manual labor with immaturity, underdevelopment, and low status; Bousquet suggests that the conception of such work as unfit for full citizens extends to a disrespect for adults who rely on such jobs for their livelihood. Undeniably, the exploitation of student labor has the material effect of driving down wages and quite literally "devaluing" this work. Chapter Five discusses the administration of composition courses, and Chapter Six eviscerates the

market logic that obscures the actual operations of academic labor. Two helpful appendices provide the crucial Supreme Court decisions on faculty and graduate-student organizing at private institutions.

Bousquet is at his best in condensing complex operations of economic and institutional forces to their clarifying core effects, often employing the arresting metaphors of management theory itself. Thus, as he outlines in the introduction and elaborates in Chapter Six, completed Ph.D.s are best understood not as the desired *product* of graduate education, but as an unwanted *by-product*, or industrial “waste.” His argument that graduate-student instructors are most valuable to the system as underpaid “apprentices,” whose meager wages are generally supplemented by loans or other external sources of support (spouses, parents) and whose exploitation is excused on the grounds that it is temporary and buffered by extra-economic benefit (enlightenment, professional mentoring), is rigorous and compelling. With degree in hand, expectations raised, families’ patience wearing thin, and loans coming due, new Ph.D.s more often than not face a future of contingent or even part-time employment—or a career change. Their value to a system based on extracting significant surplus value from an instructional force of students drops like a rock the moment they receive the diploma. Recent reports on the structure of academic employment from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the MLA make clear the accuracy and the urgency of Bousquet’s analysis, confirming that more teaching than ever before is now performed by non-degreed graduate students and contingent faculty, adjuncts, and term-contract employees.¹

Bousquet’s precise formulation should serve as a wake-up call not only to prospective Ph.D.s, but to the faculty who work with them. If graduate students’ function in the system is to serve as exploited labor rather than prospective tenure-stream faculty, what does that say about the graduate faculty who instruct them in

seminars, serve on their committees, and direct their dissertations? Although Bousquet does not pursue this point, I can only conclude that our role in this system is to attract and distract the grad-student instructors who make this system run. If we reach a point when the cost of tenured faculty is not underwritten by the surplus derived from grad-student labor by a margin more profitable than the shift to adjunct and other contingent labor would provide, we will have reached the point of no return (and no more tenure). Bousquet can be relied upon to put one’s academic pretensions in perspective.

Finally, faculty would do well to attend to Bousquet’s argument that shared governance is, in essence, a sham. His thorough review of the literature in management theory and higher-ed administration reveals a significant strain of thought in which faculty committees and senates are consciously constructed as “energy sinks” and “garbage cans” (72-74) designed to draw faculty initiative away from any arena where it might actually have an impact (collective bargaining, for example). For some, this revelation may bring relief, confirming the essential truth of long and frustrating experience. For others, one hopes, it may prove clarifying. Interestingly, given Bousquet’s long involvement in labor organizing, the unionization of tenure-stream faculty gets short shrift in this book, and perhaps rightly so. Bousquet observes that, like other organized workers—including the full-timers at UPS—unionized faculty have frequently sold out our colleagues, passively accepting the evolution of a two- (or more) tiered workplace and at times actively assisting in its production. He calls instead for a “dictatorship of the flexible” (45). Observing a potential already evident in the organization of graduate students and contingent instructors, he advocates “acknowledging the intellectual and political leadership of the union movements of the casualized” (46).

I would have liked Bousquet to say more about the potential for tenured faculty to accept more responsibility for creating the conditions for secure, fairly compensated employment and academic integrity throughout the institution. I like to think we can do better and hope this book might shame tenured faculty into stepping up. I am also convinced that the costs to academic freedom exacted by so many of the practices that Bousquet describes are unsustainable. Clearly, this is a topic that merits much closer attention. None of this, however, should be construed as real criticism. The bottom line is that Marc Bousquet has performed a vital public service in writing this compelling and critically important book. *How the University Works* should be required reading for everyone affiliated with higher education—not least, prospective Ph.D.s and the faculty who teach and mentor them. ■■

Notes

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Small-Group Pedagogy: Opening a Dialogue

Mark Wagner

Team-Based Learning: A Transformative Use of Small Groups in College Teaching. Ed. Larry K. Michaelsen, Arletta Bauman Knight, and L. Dee Fink. Sterling VA: Stylus Publishing, 2004, 304 pp., \$24.95 (PB), ISBN: 978-1-57922-086-0.

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Both of the colleges at which I have taught most recently have ongoing initiatives to create learning communities. At one college, students are given the option to live together and share their courses and schedules. At another, a Freshman Seminar program organizes students into learning groups; they attend seminars on contemporary issues, share a composition class and an “activity block” during which they receive alcohol education, instruction on gender relations, and lectures on time management and study skills. While I wouldn’t call these efforts paradigm shifts, we have entered an educational landscape where innovations in team-based learning and learning communities have begun to take root.

Team-Based Learning is an ambitious collection of essays that covers major issues in team-based pedagogy. Editors Michaelsen, Knight, and Fink divide their book into three parts. Part 1, The Key Ideas of Team-Based Learning, introduces the “Four Components of Team-Based Learning.” This essay, written by the editors and drawn from their experiences, argues that learning processes involving teams need structures and assignments aimed not at individuals but at teams. For example, the authors note that writing is a very individual act, and giving a writing assignment for a team will often result in a team simply dividing up the tasks and then heading out alone (to loaf about coffee shops, one imagines, as writers are apt to do). Michaelsen and Knight provide a checklist for assignments based on teamwork: high individual accountability; the members being in close proximity for a set period of time; teams meeting during class time; tasks requiring interactions; tasks requiring external comparison and feedback; and immediate rewards for group work. In other words, team-based learning is not just getting students into groups, but redesigning course content to enable students to work successfully allow as individuals within learning groups.

Much of the language in Part 1 is aimed at defining performance, achievement, and skills rather than on cognition, understanding, or intellectual processes. In some cases, we might suggest that forms of teaching triumph over

content. To illustrate this point, consider Birmingham and McCord's essay entitled "Group Process Research" that presents literature showing that "groups need to become high-performance teams" (Michaelsen et al., p. 73). What seems to be unstated is that group work prepares one for the performance-based requirements of the workplace, that information-sharing, willingness to help, and group cohesiveness has supplanted intellectual content at least in Birmingham and McCord's essay. Content is seen as "applied" and "experiential." Learning becomes a process of application. Content becomes part of the group process, and the group leaders and outspoken ones help the group 'perform' the knowledge. Birmingham and McCord conclude:

The research on developing high performance teams highlights a number of specific practices that, if applied individually, are likely to provide incremental improvements in learning-group effectiveness. Further, these same practices, if followed in combination, will greatly increase the probability of developing truly high-performance learning teams. (89)

Part 2, entitled *The Voices of Experience*, is a collection of 10 essays from teachers who have gone through the transformation from lecture/discussion format—called passive learning—to alternative means of presenting content. One essay by Melanie Nakaji, entitled "A Dramatic Turnaround in a Classroom of Deaf Students," offers a compelling narrative about how teams aided students with a disability. In this case, deaf students would already have a disadvantage in learning and participating in the classroom. Nakaji, a deaf teacher, found that "Very few hearing people have even a vague understanding of the Deaf culture and the issues that the deaf face. Based on what [she] observed as [her] students learned to work with each other", Nakaji became "confident that [her] deaf students have a better understanding of what they need to excel in a hearing world" (131). In this case, a subculture within

the broader educational culture benefited from team work that fueled personal growth and acceptance of their disability. Nakaji observed the class experience change "from one of merely learning about personal growth ideas into a personal growth experience" (131). This heartening essay gives evidence for the fact that team-based learning can foster both social cohesiveness and individual growth.

It is in Part 3, *Major Lessons about Team-Based Learning*, that Michaelsen provides an essay, "Frequently Asked Questions about Team-Based Learning," that encapsulates his many years of experience and pioneering work with small-group pedagogy. In fact, many of the essays in the book mention Larry Michaelsen by name; his workshops are cited by many teachers as the moment when they took the leap to team-based classes. Michaelsen's essay anchors the book as a general overview of the pedagogy. Michaelsen does a complete job of underscoring the vocabulary and acronyms of team-based learning. Some behaviors, such as 'social loafing' and 'sub-teams,' can easily undermine the efforts to create effective teams. Likewise, the author suggests from experience that some teachers do not take naturally to this type of teaching. Teachers who enjoy the performance aspect of teaching, and teachers who feel threatened by frequent challenges from students may not take to this approach. Michaelsen also makes clear that assignments such as writing and presentations are not effective for teams; instead he recommends RATs, Readiness Assessment Tests. In fact, RATs and peer evaluation forms are the only forms of assessment recommended. Michaelsen and L. Dee Fink go on to provide different types of peer evaluation forms and offer suggestions on how to grade and give merit.

Much of the literature about team-based learning originates in the early 1980s and begins to swell to a chorus in the 1990s. In this decade it has reached the point of praxis. To this reviewer, one historical link

that jumps out is that these years correspond with another educational movement that began in the early 1980s with a report entitled *A Nation at Risk* (NCCE, 1983). *A Nation at Risk* is often seen to have spearheaded a larger educational and social dialogue called Educational Reform, a reform movement in which accountability became a rallying cry for parents and administrators to begin to demand a say in the content of classrooms. Are the advocates of team-based learning a subculture within the culture shaped by Educational Reform? In particular I wonder whether the assessment focus on testing and peer review reinforces learning practices built around standardized tests as opposed to more self-reflexive practices like reading and writing.

We could say that team-based learning fosters elements of trust and collaboration, and that students will need to learn and practice social skills that foster these values. At the same time, social cohesiveness is not the same as, say, grappling with intellectual honesty or discovery impelled by research and writing (let alone abstract ideas like Kant's Categorical Imperative). How can we use team-based pedagogies to encourage personal and intellectual growth? Can these forms of learning be merged with the content that (with time and luck) spurs spiritual, intellectual, and emotional development in our students? Throughout the book, we hear that writing assignments and presentations are not effective for team work. Michaelsen et al. insist that testing and peer evaluation are the best ways to foster learning. This focus on learning styles and methods, on forms rather than content, seems to me to be part of a wider tendency within educational thought that moves curriculum away from reflective practices and toward performance (business) models.

While providing a wide range of experiential knowledge about small groups in the classroom, *Team-Based Learning: A Transformative Use of Small Groups in College Teaching* also advances dialogue on forms of teaching and learning in ways that raise questions

about what we teach. What role does compelling course content play in student success? What content should we be teaching in a changing world? Can learning teams allow for content that includes writing and research? Perhaps these questions are for another book; as it is, Michaelsen et al. have provided a provocative series of essays worth engaging in both theoretical and concrete ways. ■■

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For its inaugural period, *Currents in Teaching and Learning* has a founding Editorial Advisory Board that fulfills both editorial and advisory functions, and is made up of Worcester State College faculty members from a variety of disciplines. *Currents* will soon be soliciting interested teacher-scholars from a representative range of disciplines and higher-education institutions to form our external Advisory Board.

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Currents in Teaching and Learning is a peer-reviewed electronic journal that fosters exchanges among reflective teacher-scholars across the disciplines. Published twice a year, *Currents* seeks to improve teaching and learning in higher education with short reports on classroom practices as well as longer research, theoretical, or conceptual articles, and explorations of issues and challenges facing teachers today. Non-specialist and jargon-free, *Currents* is tended for both faculty and graduate students in higher education, teaching in all academic disciplines.

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Volume 2, Number 2, Spring 2010

Currents invites submissions for its Spring 2010 issue, including:

Short reports from different disciplines on classroom practices (2850-5700 words).

Longer research, theoretical, or conceptual articles, and explorations of issues and challenges facing teachers today (5700-7125 words).

Announcements of work-in-progress and requests for collaborators.

Book and website reviews.

We welcome both individual and group submissions.

Submissions Deadline: November 15, 2009.

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Please address all submissions and inquiries to Josna Rege via

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For further information and submissions guidelines see our

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