

CTL News

The Newsletter of the Center for Teaching & Learning

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Diversity and Pedagogy at SLU



Teaching Circle members Esther Oey (Education), Evelyn Powell Jennings (History) and Mary Jane Smith (History). Not pictured is Ilia Casanova-Marengo (Modern Languages).

Since then, the Teaching Circle has evolved into a gathering of St. Lawrence University faculty who meet bi-weekly on Friday afternoons from 3-4:30 p.m. at the CTL to discuss issues of diversity in their own classrooms. To further define their purpose, the circle created this mission statement: *The Teaching Circle on Cultural Diversity formed to deepen the members' engagement with using a variety of pedagogies to address issues of race and difference at St. Lawrence University by using readings, discussion, and development of model practices to extend awareness on diversity issues.*

Since completing Beverly Tatum's book in September, the circle has compiled readings for discussion that addressed each member's questions about how to productively raise issues and sustain conversations on diversity and difference with students. In addition to sharing teaching

experiences with one another, members continue to exchange ideas and activities to further promote understanding of diversity, debrief about current activities they have undertaken, and consider how to bring ideas for addressing diversity in the classroom to a wider audience.

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) wanted to address diversity in the classroom this year more comprehensively. To begin this process, the CTL diversity subcommittee decided to bring a small group of faculty, staff and students together in January 2003 to form a sustained reading and conversation circle. The group would focus on theoretical and practical issues pertaining to teaching and learning across difference and diversity. This small gathering of twelve became the first "Teaching Circle" at St. Lawrence University, called to recognize that all members would teach each other about the topics at hand as a result of bringing their experiences, interests and expertise to the table. The group decided to address the issues of race first and used Beverly Daniel Tatum's (1997) book *Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?* and other conversations about race to prompt the initial round of discussion and learning.

"The group would focus on theoretical and practical issues pertaining to teaching and learning across difference and diversity"

The Teaching Circle on Cultural Diversity will continue to meet throughout the 2003-04 academic year with the intention of inviting new members again in fall 2004 and of providing support to new groups interested in conducting their own circles. The Teaching Circle on Cultural Diversity is co-facilitated by Ilia Casanova-Marengo (Modern Languages) and Esther Oey (Education). If you are interested in learning more about the Teaching Circle, contact either Ilia or Esther by phone or email.

News and Events

Teaching with Technology Grants

This fall marked the inauguration of the CTL's Teaching with Technology Grants. The grants are designed to infuse technology-enhanced pedagogy into the university curriculum. They can be used for hardware, software, travel to technology-pedagogy conferences, or student assistants. Three grants were awarded this fall to JJ Jockel of Canadian Studies, Jon Gottschall of FYP, and Peter Bailey from the English Department. For more information visit the CTL website: http://web.stlawu.edu/ctl/funding_opportunities.

Digital Video Camera for Borrowing

The Center for Teaching and Learning has acquired a mini-digital video camera for faculty use -- a Sony DCR-TRV33 MiniDV Handycam. We expect this camera will prove useful in capturing classroom activities for future reference or in various research projects. The camera comes with many nice features and accessories, including a remote control tripod. The camera is intended for short-term loan and professional purposes only. If you would like to borrow the camera:

- Call the CTL Office for arrangements x5981
- Sign out the camera at the CTL office
- Please plan to return the camera to the CTL as close to within 24 hours as possible, unless alternative arrangements are made.

- Please note the camera is intended exclusively for on-campus use.
- Multiple-day loans (such as for taping a series of oral presentations) are permitted if there are no other faculty wishing to borrow it during that period.
- Please make sure the manual and all accessories are included and the battery is fully charged upon return.

We have provided online documentation to assist you in using the camera:

http://it.stlawu.edu/%7Einfotech/our_support/digital_videocam.htm

However, you may also receive personal assistance during IT liaison hours (T,W,Th)

January Marks the End of the OCI Grant

The Hewlett Grant for the Oral Communication Institute comes to an end this semester but our work on faculty development as it relates to engaged communication and dialogue continues. A special two-day workshop for past OCI participants entitled *OCI Part II: Best Practices and Sustained Dialogue* is planned for January 2004. The workshop is designed to renew our best thinking and practices around oral communication in the context of teaching and learning so participants will present some of their best oral communication and critical pedagogy practices. Time will also be devoted to learning about sustained dialogue techniques which utilize dialogue, critical listening skills, and forum building.

Workshop Reflections

Summer Technology Institute

Instructional Technology, in collaboration with the Center for Teaching and Learning, launched a pilot Summer Technology Institute May 19-22, 2003.

What is the Summer Technology Institute? The Institute is designed to be a small group faculty technology development initiative, with emphasis on developing technology skills while exploring innovative classroom pedagogy. Program participants learned to use Dreamweaver web editing software and develop an interactive web page associated with a particular course (preferably to be taught in the fall).

What do you mean by "interactive web page"? The interactive component of each web page will vary, depending upon the course and pedagogical objectives of each faculty member. It's important to first identify a course you will teach during the fall and think about how you might improve upon that course by using the web. For instance, the web page might become interactive by incorporating an image map. Or you might design a webquest for any part of this course, to draw

students more deeply into the material. Final decisions about the interactive component of your web page need not be made until the Institute commences.

Summer Technology Institute Feedback

A really beneficial learning experience at the hands of some really thoughtful and patient professionals. A refresher course is a must, since mastering this and realizing its potential for enhancing my courses will be a long-range commitment. *D. Lloyd (History)*

This was a great experience. As someone who was already familiar with HTML, I was glad to have the chance to learn a little about ways to make a web site more interactive--especially with flash text and image maps. My web sites are better in subtle ways because of this. Sondra and Jim did a great job. *C. Watts (Music)*.

We will be holding our next Summer Technology Institute May 17-21, 2004. Look for more details come mid-Spring 2004!

Teaching Insights

The “Tape Recorder” Exercise

By Traci Fordham-Hernandez,
Speech & Theatre Department

Description

This is a relatively simple “back and forth” dyad exercise that can be used in a variety of situations and to address many different issues and topics. It is not discipline-specific: it can work very well in almost any course or context. The tape recorder exercise functions to some extent like a free-write, only utilizing *oral* instead of written communication and it involves a speaker and a listener.

Instructions

Break the class into pairs. Present the topic or issue that the students will discuss (e.g., Describe to your partner your understanding of [an author]’s position; Describe to your partner the group communication role that you took on in last week’s class; Explain to your partner your answer to today’s equation; Tell your partner how you understand conflicts of masculinity in *Cape Fear*.)

1. Speaker A talks for 2 minutes while Speaker B listens *without taking notes*.
2. Speaker B repeats what s/he heard Speaker A say as accurately as possible, without embellishment for 1 minute.
3. (Reverse roles and repeat Process): Speaker B talks for 2 minutes, while Speaker A listens without taking notes.
4. Speaker A repeats what s/he heard Speaker B say as accurately as possible, without embellishment for 1 minute.
5. (OPTIONAL) Each partner writes a thought question for his/her partner.
6. (OPTIONAL) The dyads discuss the topic in greater detail.
7. (OPTIONAL, but recommended) Facilitate a class discussion, first about the topic and then about the tape recorder exercise process.

Discussion

I have used this exercise for many years, in a number of different classroom and workshop contexts. It works well because:

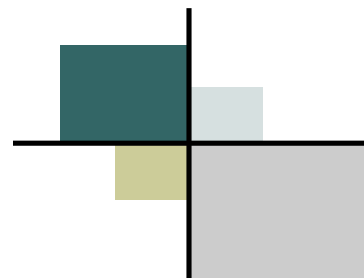
1. It enables students/participants to articulate their thinking about a topic or issue in a relatively free-form way, not in the context of a large group, and without the risk of interruption.
2. It emphasizes careful listening and understanding, or at least illustrates how difficult these processes can be.
3. It gives students/participants an opportunity to actually attend to one of their colleague’s opinions.
4. Depending on the instructor’s skill in facilitating the discussion of the exercise, it can enhance the classroom learning environment.

The exercise raises a number of issues regarding the nature of engaged communication (dialogue): it is complex, it requires committed effort. We are never simply just speakers and listeners (we are creating and internalizing meanings all the time), reaching understanding of another’s message is complicated and problematic.

The tape recorder exercise is decidedly non-dialogic; it is not a context of complicated, critical discussion, although it can be a springboard for it. The very imperfections of the tape recorder exercise can be utilized to discuss the complex nature of communication and understanding-or not. It can stand very well alone if you simply desire that your students articulate to a partner their thinking about an issue or topic.

Parenthetically, Kim Mooney, Val Lehr, Liz Regosin, and I utilized the tape recorder exercise for a presentation/workshop that we did at the annual conference of the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education (POD) in early October. Several participants at our session have since utilized the exercise in their classes.

After the exercise I asked [the students] what they thought: was it easy, hard, helpful? Our class is discussion-based, and I encourage students to respond to each other directly, and not through me. Some did not like the lack of dialogue: it made at least one person "appreciate discussion more." However, some agreed that it helped them listen: freeing up the need to formulate their own response or contribution allowed them to listen more carefully, without distraction. Some did not like the fact that they only could repeat back what the person said: they were afraid that it was "boring". But someone pointed out that listening to someone repeat/talk about your ideas was good. I liked the suggestion that 1 minute spent reflecting/summarizing could be followed by a minute of personal reaction/talking about the respondent’s ideas. Another person suggested that the person talking for two minutes could read something that the other had not read and then explain it (and vice-versa): an exercise in teaching and sharing knowledge.



Pandora's Box

Interview with Laura Rediehs: An Alternative Grading System

By Liz Regosin

CTL: You recently submitted a proposal for an alternative grading system to the Academic Affairs Committee. Can you outline that plan?

LR: I proposed to replace our current numerical grades with a simplified system of grades with qualitative rather than quantitative meanings. Basically it's a pass/fail system with the addition of a "high pass."

CTL: How would that work?

LR: People can use whatever scale/system they want within the class but grades recorded on the transcript would be "high pass," "pass," or "no credit." The important thing is that these would not get translated into numerical values and averaged together.

CTL: How does the qualitative piece fit in?

LR: It fits in terms of the meaning of the grade. "High pass" would mean that students have demonstrated exceptional mastery of the material warranting the explicit encouragement of the professor to move on to more advanced study of the topic. I've been thinking of the "high pass" in various ways. For example, in introductory-level courses, the "high pass" student is one you might encourage to seriously consider majoring in the field; he or she shows that quality of engagement. In an upper-level course, this would be the student you feel could go on to graduate study or whom you might encourage to do so. The "pass" means that a student has demonstrated sufficient mastery of the material to warrant receiving credit toward graduation.

CTL: I imagine that people will ask how this alternative grading system accounts for the broad range of ability and effort in the "pass" category.

LR: I have two responses. My first is that for many faculty and students, this system would be liberating. It would free everybody up to be worrying less about small quantitative differences and to focus on the material itself, to study for the sake of studying. The second part is that those who think that quantitative differences within the "pass" really matter can address those in an internal grading system within the course, and use that information for letters of recommendation and the like. Those differences have am-

biguous meaning anyway. There are so many different variables that account for subtle numerical differences that the numbers have no stable, objective meanings. What matters more is those details that can't come through in the numbers alone.

CTL: I could imagine protest from students who want to go on to professional and academic graduate programs. What do you say to them about this grading system?

LR: There are other schools with alternative grading systems with excellent records of students going to graduate school. I think people exaggerate the importance of conforming to a 4.0 grading system. No one is going to throw an application in the trash because it doesn't have a grade point average on it. And the transcript will be easy to read and interpret in a meaningful way because it will still be easy to tell at a glance whether a student has done moderately well or extraordinarily well in the major or in his or her classes in general. I also have suggested putting ratios on the transcript, for example, a ratio of the number of "high passes" received to the total number of classes passed.

CTL: What brought you to this system?

LR: My concern about our current system is that in averaging grades together and in tying this grade point average to so much else that matters in students' lives (from general parental approval to requirements to maintain a certain minimum G.P.A. to keep a scholarship or to participate in athletics) we've created a coercive system of external motivation that can undermine our attempts to nurture students' internal sources of motivation. But when I tried to think of an alternative, like many of our colleagues, I was not convinced that that kind of system would necessarily be an improvement. I worry that it would take too much time and be hard for others to read and interpret. And so I asked myself: "what's the most important information we're trying to convey with grades?" And really, we're trying to determine two things: whether a student should graduate, and whether that student is doing so well that we would encourage him or her to go on to graduate study. My system boils assessment down to those key determinations. Further information about students' work could be provided in letters of recommendation written by faculty, and by information that students could supply from their electronic portfolios, if we were to adopt an electronic portfolio system here.



In The Journals and On The Shelves (Literature Around Pedagogy)

Staying Fresh as a Teacher

Reviewed by Artur Poczwardowski, Psychology

Poczwardowski, A., Grosshans, O., & Trunnell, E. (2003). "Sustaining Enthusiasm in the Classroom: Reinvestment Strategies That Work." American Journal of Health Behavior 27, (4), 322-335.

This is the time when many of us feel tired as the end-of-the-semester increase in our workloads sets in. We depend on a set of coping skills in order to deal with the multiple stresses of our job. Despite that stress, most of us think being a professor is so intrinsically rewarding that we want to last in this business! And, fortunately, most of our coping seems to be effective – we're still here, right? The authors of this article offer an alternative perspective on work-related stress and energy level – not so much a remedy but an understanding of how to capitalize on one's strengths, specifically the concept of "reinvestment" strategies. Sustaining enthusiasm in the classroom over 20 years or longer could be a result of a positive, proactive, engagement-promoting approach: focusing on growth and success in work, realizing an optimal fit into profession, investing into interpersonal relationships, focusing on stimulating and uplifting experiences, and pursuing professional/personal balance. The article provides a detailed, interpretive account of the reinvestment strategies of 11 senior health-education faculty from 3-degree programs. Even though the article focuses on a research-oriented institution, we as liberal arts college professors can potentially benefit from some applications of the proposed model, particularly if they can be modified to meet our unique mission.

Readings in Critical Pedagogy

Reviewed by Robert Torres, Sociology

McLaren, P. & Farahmandpur, R. (2001). "Teaching Against Globalization and the New Imperialism: Toward a Revolutionary Pedagogy." Journal of Teacher Education 52, 136-150.

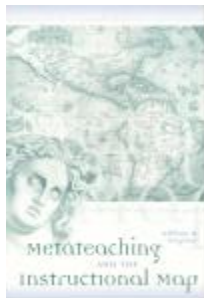
Drawing on Freire's legacy, the authors encourage the development of a "revolutionary working class pedagogy to combat the imperialism of international capital and its global redeemable assault on democracy." This pedagogy seeks to develop a critical literacy through a critique of the commodity logic that governs our everyday interactions, and to thus help workers gain control over both their intellectual and physical labor.

Leonardo, Z. 2002. "The Souls of White Folk: Critical Pedagogy, Whiteness Studies, and Globalization Discourse." Race, Ethnicity, and Education 5, 30-49.

By developing an intersectional understanding of the discourse of whiteness within the processes of globalization, Leonardo shows how white privilege transcends the nation-state. Challenging the intent of a "pedagogy of politeness" in addressing questions of whiteness in the classroom, Leonardo proposes a radical critique of whiteness that transcends the "paradox of liberal feel-good solidarity absent of dissent." Moving beyond this paradox, pushes teachers and students to develop "global studies of whiteness" and to examine how the flexibility of whiteness works in tandem with the flexibility of capital.

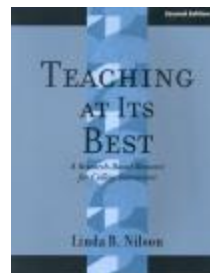
New Additions to the CTL Shelves

For information on borrowing a book, please call the Center at x5981.



William M. Timpson (1999)

This book will guide you to create your own map, moving in your own direction, following the paths important to you and your subject area, checking for landmarks and points of interest along the way, and ultimately at your destination.



Linda B. Nilson (2003)

This best-selling handbook is an essential toolbox — a compilation of hundreds of practical teaching techniques, formats, classroom activities, and exercises. It is now newly revised and expanded to cover more on the topics relevant to today's classroom such as technology and the Internet, problem-based learning, diversity, service learning, and faculty evaluation systems.

Advisory Board Center for Teaching and Learning 2003-2004

The Center for Teaching and Learning voluntary advisory board is comprised of faculty and staff members representing a variety of disciplines and participating based on their enthusiasm and interest in the Center's purpose and programming. This year's board members are listed below.

Ilia Casanova-Marengo

Bart Harloe

Steve Horwitz

Erin McCarthy

Artur Poczwardowski

Sondra Smith

Kim Mooney

Ron Flores

Randy Hill

Carolyn Johns

Esther Oey

Liz Regosin

Bob Torres



IT Liaison Hours

Tuesday: 1:00-3:00 p.m.



Wednesday: 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Thursday: 8:30-11:30 a.m.

CTL Hours

MWF: 8:00-4:30 p.m.

TTh: 10:00-12:30 p.m.



**TechFest 2004 will be held
January 5-9. Look for the
detailed brochure on-line:**

**[http://it.stlawu.edu/%7Einfotech/
training/techfest.htm](http://it.stlawu.edu/%7Einfotech/training/techfest.htm)**



Mission Statement

The St. Lawrence University Center for Teaching and Learning promotes improved student learning through facilitating excellence in teaching practices and supporting a wide range of faculty professional development activities. The Center aims to further the creativity, risk-taking, collaboration, and professional renewal among faculty members at all stages in their teaching careers. Specifically, the goals of the Center are to expose faculty to current knowledge and practice regarding teaching and learning; provide a forum for formal and informal exchanges of ideas and expertise; and stimulate, support, and reinforce pedagogies that optimize student learning.