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A GUIDE FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS OF PSYCHOLOGY

James H. Korn and Jason Sikorski

Unit 1

Introduction

Welcome! You will be working electronically on one of the most challenging and rewarding of all human activities – teaching.

The Philosophy of this Guide

Teaching is an extremely complex activity. Those of us who begin to think that we are pretty good at it often are humbled by our failures in the classroom, and even experienced teachers realize that there always is more to learn. This Guide is intended for new teachers (graduate students and less experienced faculty), but teachers at any level may find participation to be helpful. We also hope that instructors teaching a course on teaching for the first time will use the Guide along with a hard copy textbook.

The general philosophy of this program is based on two ideas: First, all elements of teaching are inter-related, and second, one's personal philosophy of teaching provides the basis for how we think about teaching and what we do as teachers in and out of the classroom. That is why we begin in Unit 2 with the development of the teaching philosophy and ask you to continue to revise that document as we go through the following units. Your beliefs about teaching will frequently be challenged by the decisions you make about plans, methods, and assessment, so that you must revise either

what you believe or what you do or both. And this can happen for the experienced teacher as well as for graduate students preparing their first course.

The inter-related nature of teaching will be apparent in our frequent requests that you examine the links between various aspects of your teaching, for example, how your course objectives are related to student assessment. Our program process is linear and logical. However, that is not the only way that teachers develop their courses, and perhaps not the primary way, so you will be asked at some times to take the perspective of either the artist or the scientist. Fantasy and imagination come into play along with logical thinking and applications of research on teaching.

The process we use relies a lot on your active involvement. Each Unit will include narrative commentary, with learning activities, critical thinking interruptions, and suggestions for outside reading. There will be specific objectives for each unit that support these general goals for this program:

- Develop a personal philosophy of teaching.
- Know the principles of course planning and design your own course.
- Develop and practice teaching skills, including lecturing, discussion management, and student assessment.
- Become aware of the literature on teaching and the resources available to support your teaching.
- Develop a plan for your continuing professional development as a teacher, including a teaching portfolio.

This last goal represents the fact that teaching is a profession, and like other professions it requires education and training that begins in graduate school and continues throughout one's career. Many graduate programs provide little or no preparation in this area, and this program is intended to begin to fill that gap. Involvement in a profession also includes joining the relevant professional organizations, attending their meetings, and working on committees, which eventually will involve you in a leadership role. It also means subscribing to teaching journals, reading books on teaching, and perhaps contributing your own research and ideas to the literature.

The major organization for psychology teachers is the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP), Division Two of the American Psychological Association (APA). If you are not a member you should join, but anyone can visit the STP web site, www.teachpsych.org.

Some of you may not see this level of professional commitment in your future because your primary professional role may not be an academic one. However, teaching is a generic skill that is used in a variety of non-academic settings. For example, clinical and organizational psychologists often are engaged in training activities. In medical settings teaching is done in "grand rounds" format. Professionals in business and engineering make presentations to groups. Most of the objectives of our program will improve all these forms of teaching.

Your first learning activity:

Take about five minutes to think about and write down your personal goals for this program.

If this were a “live” course, we would ask you to exchange your list of goals with another student in the class. We suggest that you find someone to serve as a surrogate classmate who agrees to help you reflect on your work in this program.

Before moving ahead, read the following quotation. These words can be both inspirational and humbling.

We Teach Who We Are

I am a teacher at heart, and there are moments in the classroom when I can hardly hold the joy. When my students and I discover uncharted territory to explore, when the pathway out of a thicket opens up before us, when our experience is illuminated by the lightning-life of the mind – then teaching is the finest work I know.

But at other moments, the classroom is so lifeless or painful or confused – and I am so powerless to do anything about it – that my claim to be a teacher seems a transparent sham. Then the enemy is everywhere; in those students from some alien planet, in that subject I thought I knew, and in the personal pathology that keeps me earning my living this way. What a fool I was to imagine that I had

mastered this occult art – harder to divine than tea leaves and impossible for mortals to do even passably well!

Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 1998, p. 1.

Your Guides

James H. Korn, Ph.D. (Jim)

I received my Ph.D. from Carnegie-Mellon University (1965) in physiological psychology. I served on the faculty at CMU until 1974, when I came to Saint Louis University as department chair. The introductory course and History of Psychology are the courses I taught most often, but I also taught courses in adult development, program evaluation, and qualitative research methods.

My commitment to developing teachers began during the tumultuous days of the late 1960s. Now I am retired. For most of my career I have been actively involved in the Society for the Teaching of Psychology, serving as President in 1988-89. My hobbies are gardening, walking, reading, and playing with my grandchildren.

My teaching autobiography, “Epiphany in Schenley Park,” can be found in the e-book, “the Teaching of Psychology in Autobiography, Volume 2” on the STP web site: www.teachpsych.org.

Jason Sikorski, Ph.D.

I received my Ph. D. from Auburn University (2005) in clinical psychology, where I received stellar training in how to be a decent teacher from one of the world’s best, Dr. William Buskist. I am a proud past winner of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology McKeachie Early Career Award (2004). Yet, I am most proud of being the

first chairperson of the Graduate Student Association for beginning teachers within the Society for the Teaching of Psychology, which has grown considerably over the last decade. My hobbies include: watching baseball, hiking, reading, and sleep. Of note, I am proud to have worked on this volume with Jim, who truly represents a “teacher of teachers.”

My teaching autobiography, “An Evolution of Emphasis: From Learning to Teach to Teaching to Learn,” can be found in the e-book, “The Teaching of Psychology in Autobiography, Volume 1” on the STP web site.

Using this Guide

This is a Guide, not a textbook. It differs from the typical textbook in several ways. We include many learning activities that ask you to stop reading and do something, usually writing, but also communicating with others and searching other sources. We provide links to most of these sources.

You can follow this Guide from this first unit to the last one, as you would in a live course. We also envision the Guide as an Emergency Room for instructors who have been assigned a course to teach that begins next week and who have had no formal preparation for teaching. Unfortunately this happens all too often. If you need an ER, you might jump into Unit 3 on Planning a Course to find suggestions for what to do on the first day.

You can do this on your own. However, we suggest you find people who will work with you face-to-face (or at least ear-to-ear) as you work through this guide. We already suggested that you find a friend to serve as surrogate classmate. You also may

want to seek an experienced teacher to be your supervisor. This person can help you reflect on your learning activities and discuss teaching issues with you. She or he may also be able to provide you with practice teaching opportunities.

You should find a textbook to serve as a supplement to this guide that provides what we think are the essentials for beginning teachers. The books we suggest go into much greater detail and provide more extensive referencing than we do. Here are a few that we think would be helpful:

Davis, B. G. (2009). *Tools for teaching*. (2nd ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Each of the 61 brief chapters in this book has quick tips on all aspects of teaching.

It's particularly good when you need a quick fix.

Forsyth, D. R. (2003). *The professors guide to teaching: Psychological principles and practices*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

This book is especially strong in providing research data to support the advice.

Goss Lucas, S., & Bernstein, D. A. (2005). *Teaching psychology: A step by step guide*.

Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

You will find lots of useful checklists and forms, and a supporting CD.

McKeachie, W. J., & Svinicki, M. (2006). *Teaching tips: Strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers*. (12th edition). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Here is a good combination of tips and research on teaching. After twelve editions over almost 60 years it must be good.

On Line Resources

We will refer you to various on line sources as you go through the units in this Guide. There are two important sources that we draw your attention to now. The first is the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP), Division Two of the American Psychological Association. <http://www.teachpsych.org/> We encourage you to join STP and take an active part in its activities. If you are a student there is a special membership rate and a graduate student network. For information on teaching go to the web site and click on “Resources.” You do not have to be a member to access most of the items you will find.

The American Psychological Society (<http://www.psychologicalscience.org>) also has a student group and information on teaching. When you go to that web site click on “Teaching Psychology,” and then on “Teaching Tips.” We suggest you take a quick look at both these sites now.

Finally, each of us will be available to answer questions and discuss teaching issues via e-mail:

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Acknowledgments

Anyone who has been teaching for a while, either many years (Jim) or a few (Jason), knows that much of what they know and do came from others. You pick up ideas and tips from colleagues, teaching conferences, and reading. The community of teachers is quite generous when it comes to sharing information, and providing advice and encouragement. These friends helped us by reading selected Units and providing resources: Bill Buskist, Matt Grawitch, Jane Halonen, Janet Kuebli, Steve Meyers, and Dave Munz.

You will be especially fortunate if you have had a true mentor, and each of us has been fortunate in that way. A true mentor is more than someone who “shows you the ropes” in some area, or with whom you drink a few beers. The relationship is much deeper. The mentor guides your development and models not only teaching style but academic and personal values. After you gain independence, the mentor remains a close friend.

Kenneth E. (Keck) Moyer was my (Jim) teacher and dissertation advisor at Carnegie-Mellon. First, he taught me to be a scientist, and the values of hard work and careful organization. He also welcomed me into his home and my family became part of his family. He supported me in my transition from researcher to teacher, and continued to provide advice and support. I miss him.

For me (Jason), William Buskist was my mentor. In addition to exposing me to a range of learning possibilities and professional collaborations, he taught me to write and think critically about everything. He took the time to mold my professional being, and

somehow influenced my personal identity in a beautifully unintentional fashion. I'm very grateful for Dr. Buskist showing me the ropes and how many rewards one can derive through teaching.

Unit 2

Developing Your Philosophy of Teaching

Unit Objectives

1. Write a first draft of your teaching philosophy -- or a new draft if you have done this before.
2. Revise that draft based on peer feedback, discussion, and contemplation.
3. Relate your teaching style to your philosophy.

Writing Your Philosophy of Teaching

"There is nothing so practical as a good theory." This quotation is closely associated with the renowned social psychologist, Kurt Lewin, who also believed that good theories are shaped by practical experiences. The development of your teaching philosophy is the heart of this unit. It is the theory that guides what you do as a teacher, and that is shaped by your experiences.

Effective teaching begins with the teaching philosophy, which represents the personal theory that teachers construct to systematize their rationale for guiding student learning (Schonwetter, Sokal, Friesen, & Taylor, 2002). This statement is far from a static document. Rather, an essential characteristic of effective teachers lies in their willingness to learn or change for a lifetime (Sikorski, 2004, 2005). As such, teaching philosophies evolve through the changing seasons of a teacher's life and career. In fact, it will change even in the relatively short time that it will take you to go through this book.

In this Guide we follow this simple model:

Philosophy > Objectives > Methods > Learning > Evaluation > Reflection

Your philosophy (explicit or implicit) of teaching and learning determines the objectives you choose for your courses. These objectives lead to decisions about the most appropriate teaching methods and ways of assessing student learning. All of this is evaluated and modified based on the data you obtain, and after you take time to think about it. Your reflection may lead you to revise your philosophy, and the cycle repeats.

As you go through this program you will be asked to make the links explicit. What are those arrows (>) in the model? You will see that your philosophy will guide your teaching from major areas such as your course objectives to mundane aspects like your attendance policy.

Activity: Write your philosophy of teaching.

Given that simple, direct instruction, most participants are dismayed and have questions. What should I write? How long should it be? The primary reason for asking you to do this without preparation and suggestions is that this should be your philosophy, not that of some expert. It should be yours in form as well as content. You are not starting from a blank slate, but from years of experience as a student and perhaps with a little or a lot of teaching experience. So just do it; let the force be with you. We'll take it from there. The only requirements are that you write in the first person (this is your philosophy) and use non-technical language because others will read it eventually.

Instructions. Everyone has a preferred way of thinking and composing, so these are only suggestions. Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Think for a while about teaching and whatever that brings to mind, perhaps occasionally jotting a note. Then do some free writing, where you write continuously without taking your pen from the page. Next, reflect some more on what you have written, and finally re-write it doing a little organizing in preparation for showing this first draft to someone else. Devote about an hour to this. Or do this for a while, change to some other unrelated activity, and then come back to your philosophy.

For beginning teachers, and experts alike, the abstract nature of the process by which an initial teaching philosophy is constructed or revised can be viewed as intimidating or meaningless. Have faith! In this Unit we provide advice for how one might go about constructing an effective teaching philosophy statement, with special attention paid to clarifying the value in this abstract and personal process that is intended to facilitate accountability and ownership of what we truly do as teachers.

Reflecting on Your Teaching Philosophy

Our own experience provides the basis for much of what we write in a teaching philosophy. We think of good and bad teachers we have had, in and outside of the classroom. We recall reading things about teaching that struck us as profound or useful. Our view of human nature and the meaning of life come into play.

Activity: Revise your teaching philosophy.

These are some potentially useful questions to stimulate your thinking about your teaching philosophy:

1. Who was the best teacher you ever had? Who was the worst? (Or think of a composite of these good and bad teachers) List their characteristics.
2. Describe your style or the style you expect to have when you teach.
3. If you overheard students talking about you and your teaching, what would you want them to be saying? Why is that important to you?
4. How do (or would) you motivate students to help them learn? What motivators would you never use?
5. Does (or would) your teaching vary depending on the course you are teaching and the kind of students you have? Are there essential principles in your philosophy that would not depend on the situation?
6. Think of a metaphor for your teaching. Why is your teaching like this metaphor, and in what ways is it not like your chosen metaphor?

After thinking about these questions, revise your draft.

You have taken the first steps in constructing a teaching philosophy that works. As our model indicates, your philosophy of teaching determines the objectives you choose for your courses. These objectives lead to decisions about the most appropriate teaching methods to implement in the classroom and viable ways of assessing student learning. In reality our teaching rarely develops in this rational, linear manner. In fact, teaching philosophies are intended to be reconsidered after a week, month, or year of teaching “in the trenches” (Sikorski, 2005).

Critical Thinking Interruption

- ***What does it mean when teachers cannot articulate their philosophy of teaching?***

At this point, it may be useful to review some teaching philosophy statements. Of course, these examples are not provided to serve as reservoirs of ideas to borrow, rather they are provided in hopes of further stimulating critical thinking about your own personal style of teaching students. You will find these examples in a supplement to this chapter (Appendix A). Please do not go to these statements until you have written a second draft of your own philosophy. Our concern is that you may be unduly influenced by the writing style and ideas of others. This should be **your** philosophy.

Critical Thinking Interruption: Critiquing teaching philosophies

- ***What views noted in the teaching philosophies in the Appendix resonate most with you?***
 - **What would you like to have clarified and added in these statements?**
-

There may be some clichés in what we write, but mostly our ideas are deeply felt.

Writing that is deeply felt may not, however, be writing that is clear, and that is why having someone else read your essay can be helpful.

Activity: Collaborative review.

Find another person who also is developing a teaching philosophy and exchange your essays. We do this face-to-face in a workshop, but you could do this by e-mail or use regular mail and the telephone. For most of us, showing our writing to another person is threatening, especially when it is an early draft of something. Realize that you both are in the same boat, that yes, it is rough, and you do have some grammatical and spelling errors, and you really can say it better. After getting over your reluctance for self-revelation, use these questions to guide your critique of each other's essay:

- What are the main points of this essay?
- What is the strongest part of this essay?
- What is the weakest part of this essay?

- What additional questions do you have and what other sub-topics would you like to read about in this essay?

Write your responses to these questions about your partner's philosophy statement, then communicate with that person and discuss what each of you wrote. One of the best methods for developing as a teacher is talking with others about what we do and think (Sikorski, 2004). Now with feedback from another person in hand and your conversation in mind, make some notes for yourself about how you may want to revise your essay.

The teaching philosophy is an evolving statement that will change as you work through this Guide, and later as you continue your teaching. The process of change is based on the psychological theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). When we have two thoughts (cognitions) that don't fit (dissonance) this makes us uncomfortable, and we can eliminate that discomfort by changing one of the thoughts. In teaching your thoughts come from your philosophy and your practices; when they don't match one or the other must change to reduce the dissonance.

In both of our teaching philosophies (see Appendix A), there are organizing principles that are not always implemented religiously in the classroom. For instance, we both speak a great deal about the importance of active learning endeavors (e.g., debates, critical thinking discussions, hands-on activities), yet note our realization that our classes often involve lecturing to students much more than half of the time. When we recognized this dissonance, we each described feeling exasperated with ourselves because this

discrepancy had been evident for several semesters. In discussions, we wondered why we were so reluctant to change either our philosophies or our teaching methods.

Unfortunately, without careful and frequent deliberation and discussion, cognitive dissonance is difficult to identify and not always easily resolved. In fact, sometimes more than one discussion or formal feedback session is required before discrepancies between philosophy and practice are realized and remedied.

Teaching Style

Your philosophy may include a description of what you will be like as a teacher -- your classroom performance and how you relate to students. Like your personality, some of your style is determined by heredity, but much of it is learned and can be changed. You have some choice about teaching style, which is why it is worth thinking about it here.

Jay Parini (1997) says that teachers "need to invent and cultivate a voice that serves their personal needs, their students, and the material at hand," and this "self-presentation involves the donning of a mask," our teaching persona (p. A92). We agree with Parini that you "learn to teach by listening closely to your own teachers, by taking on their voices, imitating them, digesting them so that they become part of your own voice (p. A92)." These characteristics are blended with our own, and over time we discover what works well so that a more authentic persona develops.

Several typologies of teaching styles have been developed to describe ways of relating to students. We are not particularly in favor of putting people into categories; they almost always are incomplete and overlapping. However, Anthony Grasha has

developed a typology that is useful as an exercise to understand your style. His book, *Teaching with Style* (1996), includes an inventory (p. 159-164) that will give you a score for each of these five teaching styles (adapted from Grasha, p. 154):

Expert. Possesses knowledge and expertise that students need. Maintains status by displaying detailed knowledge and challenging students to enhance their competence. Concerned with transmitting information and insuring that students are well prepared.

Formal Authority. Status comes from knowledge and role as a faculty member. Concerned with giving positive and negative feedback, establishing learning goals, expectations, and rules of conduct. Provides students with the structure they need to learn.

Personal Model. Teaches by personal example and models how to think and behave. Oversees, guides, and directs by showing how to do things and encouraging students to observe and emulate the model.

Facilitator. Emphasizes the personal nature of student-teacher interactions. Guides students by asking questions, suggesting alternatives, and encouraging students to make informed choices. Overall goal is to develop the capacity for independent action and responsibility.

Delegator. Concerned with developing the capacity to function in an autonomous fashion. Students work independently or in teams with the teacher as a resource person.

The instructions for this inventory ask the respondent to keep a specific course in mind when completing the inventory, thus recognizing that our style may vary depending

on the situation. Grasha has done extensive research with the inventory and reports clusters of styles that go together. For example, he found that the most common cluster (38% of faculty) has a combination of expert and formal authority as the primary teaching style. You can take this survey by going to:

<http://www.longleaf.net/teachingstyle.html>

Activity: Put some thought into your own teaching style.

Take some time to consider which teaching styles best describe your unique approach in the classroom. Consider the following questions once you arrive at some sort of conclusion regarding what “type” of teacher you are.

- How do the results match your image of your style?
 - How does your style differ for different courses? If you completed this for only one course, then say how you might expect to see differences in some other course that you might teach.
 - How do the results compare to your teaching philosophy? If there are differences, will you change your philosophy?
-

The major objective of this unit has been for you to develop your teaching philosophy, and to increase the likelihood that it really is yours we have provided minimal direction on the content and style of your statement. We hope you have done your best to make this your own deeply felt view of teaching and learning.

There are sources you can use that give more specific directions about how to write a philosophy of teaching. Two documents (American Chemical Society, 2000; Chism, 1997-1998) provide particularly useful suggestions. We urge you not to read these unless you feel that you already have made a sufficient effort to write a philosophy that truly is your own in both content and style. Internet addresses to access these sources are in our reference list. We agree with Nancy Van Note Chism's suggestion that the philosophy statement should be individual, reflective, and personal, creating "a vivid portrait of a person who is intentional about teaching practices and committed to a career" (p. 32). The American Chemical Society brochure is more directive than we prefer to be, but has a lot of good specific advice with a section on documentation and reflection.

The staff of the teaching and learning center at the University of Michigan conducted a survey of faculty search committee chairs at large universities (Kaplan, et al., 2007), and asked, "What makes a teaching statement successful?" The responses were sorted into these five categories (p. 248):

- Offers evidence of practice. Statements provided specific examples linking their philosophy to what they actually did as teachers.
- Is student-centered and uses active learning.
- Demonstrates reflectiveness showing how changes were made in the classroom.
- Conveys enthusiasm for teaching and a vision.
- Is well written, clear and readable.

On the negative side, unsuccessful statements were "generic, full of boilerplate language, [and did] not appear to be taken seriously" (p. 249).

The report of this research includes a rubric used in the Michigan teaching center to evaluate philosophy statements. This rubric and examples of teaching statements can be found at <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/strategies/tstpts.php>. You may find this helpful, but as we said before, this should be your statement.

Audience

The documents we refer to in the last section tell you to be aware of the audience for your statement. That is absolutely essential. As the ACS brochure says, "The most important audience . . . is yourself" (p. 7). For that audience you are least constrained by style, length, and other details. Eventually you may have a file with notes, drafts of early versions, and reflections on your development. This is the practical theory you use to implement your teaching style.

However, there will be other important audiences. When you search for an academic position many places will ask specifically for your teaching philosophy, and will expect to see it in a more concise form that you have written for yourself. If you are successful in your job search – or already have that academic position – you will be evaluated for salary increments, promotion and tenure. Then Deans and committees will want to know how you view teaching. Be informed about your audience. Your core values should not change, but you can use different examples and emphasize certain elements of your philosophy. Actually, your recognition of those differences can itself be a part of your philosophy.

Activity: Applying for a job or promotion.

Imagine that you are applying for a position at an institution that has asked for your approach to teaching, i.e., your teaching philosophy. If you already have a position, imagine your promotion committee asking for that statement.

- Take your latest draft and re-write it for this other audience.
- Give it or send it to a person who is in a position to hire or promote faculty, and ask for their comments.

There is one other version of your philosophy you probably will need if you interview for a job, the “sound bite.” A busy Dean will have glanced at your materials, but not have had time to read them carefully. The Dean says, “tell me about this teaching philosophy of yours.” You have about two minutes. What will you say? Develop your sound bite and present it to a friend.

We are not the first people to have thought about a philosophy of teaching or, more generally, of education. Real philosophers like Aristotle, Kant, and Dewey have written extensively and with great wisdom on this topic (Frankena, 1965). One of the characteristics of good teachers is that they are scholars of teaching, which means that we read extensively to discover what others think and do, and we keep up with the research on teaching, both in general and in our discipline. It is not enough to base one's ideas about teaching only on personal experience. We would not want our students to do that, but would want them to become educated by reading and thinking critically. At the end

of chapters in this book, some suggestions for future reading are noted. These lists are intended to further stimulate your thinking about your teaching. We recommend that readers pursue these additional readings on teaching-related issues.

In Unit 10 we will look at the teaching portfolio as a medium to present your teaching when you are looking for a job, seeking promotion and tenure, and for your own development. For any of these purposes, your philosophy statement will be the central document; everything else grows from that

Looking Ahead

In the next unit we work on the design of a course. This is where you put your teaching philosophy to work. As you wrote your teaching philosophy statement, you probably were thinking about teaching experiences you have had or expect to have. Using your imagination is a good way to develop your philosophy. We have visualized ourselves standing in the front of an auditorium full of students, speaking eloquently, and seeing the students being fascinated and inspired. Yet we believe in the importance of active learning and frequent assessment. Planning a course will force you to make choices about objectives, methods, assessments, and how they all fit with each other and with your philosophy. You may have to put aside your dream of an award for performance, and substitute satisfaction in achieving specific objectives.

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Additional Recommended Readings

- Brookfield, S. D. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

This is a general discussion of teaching, but with particular emphasis on self criticism for improvement.

Davis, S. F. & Buskist, W. (2002). (Eds.). *The teaching of psychology: Essays in honor of Wilbert J. McKeachie and Charles L. Brewer*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

An excellent collection of essays on all aspects of teaching.

Halpern, D. F., et al. (1998). Scholarship in psychology: A paradigm for the twenty-first century. *American Psychologist*, 53(12), 1292-1297.

These authors present a strong case for putting the scholarly side of teaching on a par with other conceptions of research.

James, W. (1958). *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to students on some of life's ideals*. New York: Norton. (Original work published 1899)

In over 100 years no one has written a better book on principles of psychology applied to teaching, and this book is written better than any other. The best edition of this book is from Harvard University Press, but the one cited here is inexpensive. It also contains talks to students on life's ideals.

Palmer, P. J. (1998). *The courage to teach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This book is inspirational. Palmer writes not only about the joy of teaching, but also challenges and disappointments.

Tompkins, J. (1996). *A life in school: What the teacher learned*. Reading, MA: Perseus Books.

An intimate view of a teacher's struggle to find her values and style. Jim doesn't agree with her teaching methods, but joining her in the process of discovery is quite worthwhile.

Appendix A

Teaching Philosophy Statements

Jason and Jim have included their philosophies, Jason is first and Jim's is the last one. The others are from volunteers who gave permission to include their statements as examples.

Jason Sikorski
Central Connecticut State University
Written in 2009

As my teaching experience accumulated and my love of teaching intensified, I began to think more deeply about my role as an educator in society. I began to read extensively about the relationship between scholarship and teaching and came to understand that psychologists are in a unique position to impart knowledge to students. After all, many of the behaviors exhibited by “master teachers” across disciplines include a heavy dose of psychology. For instance, the best teachers use operant learning procedures (e.g., positive reinforcement), cognitive psychology principles (e.g., critical thinking, problem-solving, meta-cognition), and even social psychology (e.g., creating an environment conducive to learning gains) in the classroom. Being passionate, knowledgeable, and approachable sets the stage for students to learn in class, just as developing rapport in therapy could lead to client gains. In short, the most essential tenet of my philosophy on teaching is to use what I have learned as a psychologist in the classroom.

I strive to create a classroom that is comfortable and conducive to the critical evaluation of principles in psychology as they apply to our own lives. I supplement student readings with lectures, discussions, and vivid demonstrations that I hope bring to life what students read. In my mind, if students cannot take psychological principles out of the classroom and apply them to their own lives, then we as teachers have not fulfilled our responsibilities as educators. We should desire to be meaningful in the lives of our students. Thus, my second tenet of my philosophy on teaching is to be accountable for making learning last and being a role model for the passionate pursuit of lifelong learning.

Finally, I always want teaching to be fun. I have no reservations in admitting that I teach and write about teaching because I love it. Teaching to me represents a passion, an important responsibility, and a true joy that I plan on pursuing for the rest of my professional life. The rich and invigorating academic environment at my University is ideally suited for me as someone who will always desire to learn and to teach.

Beth Kania-Gosche
Lindenwood University
Written in

“Teachers teach more by what they are than by what they say.”
-Anonymous

Students learn by being challenged, and the best teaching arises when the instructor is also challenged. Education should help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and improve both. Therefore, the challenges must come not only from the teacher but also from other students, situations from the real world, and from within the student. Providing choices for students, both in topic of assignment and in scoring of the assignment, increases motivation and variety in the classroom, while increasing the respect students and teacher have for each other. The teacher’s job is to push students who are not challenging themselves enough and scaffold those students who may be frustrated. My job as a teacher is also to ensure that students have the necessary skills and prerequisite knowledge to meet the challenges presented in this constructivist classroom.

The teacher models the classroom expectations for the students. Students learn where they feel safe, both physically and emotionally, so building a community of learners is essential at any level of education. The perspectives of my students are important to me, because there is only one teacher and many students in a classroom. In the college setting, I consider myself a model for my students, who are future teachers. I strive to always “practice what I preach” by actually demonstrating the instructional methods, theories, and technologies.

I try to respond to the needs of my students and improve my practice by asking for student opinions. I never teach the same class twice, using previous experiences to improve my practice. When students turn in assignments, I always ask for feedback and recommendations, modeling reflective practice. Students ask questions not only of me but also of the entire class. My teaching style is informal; I often use humor and personal examples to expand concepts from the textbook. I want my students to feel comfortable asking me questions, asking for help, or disagreeing with me.

Many of my assignments require research beyond the textbook to journals in the field. I want my students to be able to find, comprehend, analyze, and apply current journal articles and research in the field. Even in courses that are not directly related to writing, I demand it from my students at almost every class meeting, usually sharing my own writing as well. For assignments I want my students to see a broader audience than just the instructor, so they share their completed assignments with a group before turning them in or the assignment itself may be a presentation or teaching a lesson to the class. As I always tell my upper level education students the first day of class, “I want you to stop thinking like students and start thinking like teachers.”

D'Arcy Reynolds
University of Southern Indiana
Written in 2008

Teaching Experience and Values

I believe that learning psychological concepts and theory provides a lens through which we can better understand our world. In my teaching, I hope to help my students think, feel, and behave in ways that empower them to lead more personally meaningful lives and to have a beneficial effect on society. I try to do this by assisting them to think critically while grounding them in a respectful relationship that motivates them to do their best. Because of my growing awareness of my own cultural perspective, I will always have a heartfelt desire to strive for more knowledge, awareness, and especially experience of the diverse individuals in my classes.

My personal values and ideology have been strongly influenced by my teaching experiences. I was the instructor of record for four sections of introductory psychology (60 students per section) and one section of abnormal psychology (10 students) at a regional state university and one section of introductory psychology (10 students) at a small Catholic college. Class sections consisted of students with differing academic aptitudes, ethnicities, and disabilities. In the past, I was the lab instructor for four sections of a psychological research methods lab class over an academic year.

There are at least two models that underlie my teaching. I think my dominant means of teaching attempts to instill both the skills and the disposition towards critical thinking (Halpern, 1995). The goal is to involve students actively in the evaluation of what they read and hear and to get them to appreciate the unfinished or open-ended nature of intellectual inquiry. Although much of psychological research content may disappear from students' memories, their critical thinking approach and its strategies should persist long after their graduation.

I also have a strong belief in a complementary model based on both my clinical and research emphasis on the therapeutic alliance (Catty, 2004; Reynolds, Stiles, & Grohol, 2006). This relational model of teaching is to support students' achievement motivation by creating an interpersonal environment that maximizes safety and minimizes the fear of failure (Buskist & Saville, 2004). In this context, I try to balance challenging my students with achievable tasks while conveying that effort will be rewarded, coupling their achievement to their effort and ability, and ensuring that their learning attempts are actively supported by both myself and fellow students. Within this nurturing context, intellectual and personal development is possible.

Teaching Methods and Goals

Methods and goals for student learning. I have four general expectations for my students to reach by the conclusion of the course (see "General Course Goals" on my syllabi). Following from my critical thinking model of teaching, I want students to

understand that psychology is a science, rather than merely common sense (Fletcher, 1984). One student wrote, *"I feel I can make inferences accurately from data analyses."* Similarly, I encourage them to learn "how we know what we know," specifically the proper research methods to address questions about behavior and mental processes (American Psychological Association, 2007). Another student wrote, *"I have a much better understanding of the research process and confidence in my newly acquired skills as an experimenter."* Next, I want my students to write about the course content using its authorized format (APA style). One student wrote, *"I gained a great amount of factual knowledge and acquired a writing style that I was completely unfamiliar with."* Last, I encourage them to apply what we know to current topics related to other areas of intellectual inquiry and everyday life (Brender, 1982; Grasha, 1974). Another student wrote, *"I believe that this course provides a basis for 'real-life' research, and prepared students well for the future."*

In my introductory psychology class, I try to address all these general goals by having students practice the rudiments of scientific thinking. This involves an empirical approach of collecting information (e.g., watching an in-class video clip of "real life" phenomenon), developing tentative hypotheses based on the data collected, analyzing the data using their accumulated knowledge of the discipline, and conveying their findings in a formal written manner.

In my research methods class, I have them expand on this scientific foundation by learning to relate to a scientific community by conducting and writing up an experiment. Students experience active learning when they carry out psychological research through its various stages both individually and in a group context. Low and high stakes writing activities that include opportunities for revision, peer review, quality instructor feedback, and conferencing dramatically improve their ability to write critically and effectively using the American Psychological Association's formatting and style guidelines (Elbow, 1997).

I feel that students learn best when they are full, active, and respectful participants in the learning/teaching process. Accordingly, students need to meet certain pragmatic considerations. First, to attend class on time or if they miss class to take the responsibility to obtain all missed information and necessary course materials. Second, to demonstrate respect for fellow classmates by devoting their class time and conversations to on-task activities. Third, to submit class work on the designated due date at the proper time in class.

Assessing student learning and reflective process for continuing teacher development. Consistent with my teaching students how to employ the scientific approach, I use a scholarly teaching conceptual framework (Richlin, 2001). Like any scientific investigation, I start with a goal (observe teaching/learning connection problem or opportunity), read the related pedagogy literature, determine appropriate methods for reaching my goals, systematically determine whether students are making progress toward those goals, reflect on what my data tell me about my methods and conceptual framework, and use the data to inform my subsequent teaching.

I learn whether my teaching goals have been met by examining students' performance on the various assignments. In addition, I rely on their informal and formal teaching evaluations. I also periodically seek out opportunities during the semester for supervisor and peer evaluations. Last, I make continuing attempts to improve my teaching through participation in teaching seminars and conferences (e.g., Preparing Future Faculty Program and the Annual Lilly Conference on College Teaching).

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Alisha Francis
Northwest Missouri State University
Written in

As a teacher, I view my role as similar to that of an orchestra conductor. My goal is to create a synergy, creating an environment where the students can move beyond the individual pieces of information to realize greater knowledge, skills, abilities, and understanding. The students are not, however, in the role of the audience passively taking in the experience. They are the performers who bring their prior experience and knowledge, engaging with the material.

The discipline of Psychology offers significant insight into the learning process, highlighting the importance of active engagement and experience. As an instructor, I am an essential part of that experience. As with a conductor, I have to determine the focus, pace, and tone – in my case, the composition is the specific course as well as each class session. I pull together the different forms of knowledge, including course content, life skills, and learning skills. Then, I work to find a structure that best facilitates their interaction, considering not only the process of information delivery, but also creating an environment conducive to learning.

At times, the content requires that I assume the role of expert – I must convey facts and concepts to provide a foundation for subsequent learning. Many times, however, I can utilize active and experiential learning techniques to facilitate learning without being an expert delivering information. By employing varied teaching methods I encourage students to engage with the subject matter, helping them “teach themselves,” and teach their peers.

This approach to learning may also require that I assume the role of mediator or translator in order to help students reconcile various perspectives. Facts and concepts do not always form a perfect picture of knowledge, creating perceived contradictions for students. Similarly, active and experiential learning activities may surface differences in personality and perspective that lead to conflict between students. My role includes helping students recognize the value in different perspectives and understand how differences may be complementary.

Feedback, related to both assessment and evaluation, unifies many aspects of the learning process. I strive for a balance between encouraging students and challenging them, attempting to establish realistic standards for academic performance that consider student morale and self-esteem but do not sacrifice rigor.

As a teacher, I hope that each student achieves insight and understanding that they would have had if I had not been there. At the same time, I understand that students come to the classroom with different motivations, abilities, learning styles, and perspectives – the same thing that sparks interest and a desire to learn in one student may leave five

others yawning and frustrated. While I can not be all things to everyone, I can establish a student-centered learning community that values diverse perspectives and integrates them into course content, challenges students of varying abilities, and engages students with differing motivations

Sometimes – some classes, some semesters – the end result lacks harmony or coherence. Sometimes, my rhythm will not mesh well with the students. Sometimes I’ll be too enthusiastic with one component, overwhelming the students. Sometimes I’ll overlook a nuance, and the results will be lacking. Many times, however, it comes together beautifully. The students and I find a harmony with knowledge, creating a learning environment that is powerful.

From Passion to Desire.
James H. Korn
Saint Louis University (Emeritus)
Written in 2000

“I have a passion for teaching” was the opening phrase in the two previous versions of my teaching philosophy. During the past two years I have come to doubt that this is the feeling that drives my teaching and is most present in it. I become tired of teaching too often, I look forward to the days I am not in the classroom, and I doubt my authenticity when I read that phrase. I am a good teacher, but not passionate. What I do experience is the excellence of desire.

This excellence of desire means wanting something with all your heart, and continually trying to find it. But what you want is unreachable so it is the wanting, the desire, that is excellent, not some outcome. It is about being and doing; about living the teaching life. It shows itself in teaching most often in the daily work we do, not only in those too rare peak experiences of glory in the classroom, and not in the prizes for excellence that some of us receive. I want to be a good teacher at the mundane level of class preparation, teaching methods, and relationships with students. I want this. That is the excellence of desire.

Maybe I am trying too hard. After one-third of a century of teaching I should have this all figured out. Desire is powerful, and trying to be excellent is a burden. Am I doing enough and is it good? Will they like me and, more importantly, will I like me? Trying too hard means over-preparing, compulsing over phrases in lecture notes, and worrying about how you will do and are doing and have done. But this energy is directed at the process of teaching, not the outcomes. What I want is to feel the spirit present in the classroom, and in my thoughts about class and my subject. The excellence of desire is expressed not only in the intense wanting during the struggle with my tasks, but also in my more relaxed awareness that this is my task. I am a teacher.

Wanting is what is spiritual about teaching: it is our animating principle and it gives us life. Although intangible, it is essential to our nature as teachers. It is our soul. I try to bring this spirituality into the classroom because I believe that is my most important role as a teacher; it defines for me what teaching is: bringing the spirit with the knowledge to the students. I call this “closeness learning,” to distinguish teaching with soul from teaching that emphasizes technology and “distance learning.”

- I have retained some specifics from the previous versions of my philosophy:
- Teaching is a form of service to others, my students. I respect students as free, responsible individuals whose most important task is learning how to learn.
 - I try to show the beauty and power of ideas based in fact and imagination.
 - I value active and collaborative learning, and continue to fight my habit of teacher-centeredness.
 - Teaching is a community activity. We learn about teaching from each other. Conferences and conversations about teaching are the Viagra for my passion and desire.

As a senior member of this teaching community, I have an opportunity to help develop the next generation of teachers. I want to be able to make a difference not only for the students in my own classroom, but also for the students of those future teachers. That is my greatest desire.

Unit 3

Planning A Course: Philosophy Becomes Practice

Unit Objectives:

1. Develop a plan for a course that you will teach or expect to teach.
2. Design a syllabus for that course, including objectives, methods and assessment.
3. Link that syllabus to your philosophy.
4. Write a plan for the first day of class.
5. Develop a vision for your ideal course.
6. Link that vision to your philosophy.

Course Planning in the Beginning

What do teachers think about when they get ready to teach a course? To some extent that depends on your teaching experience. After a number of years teachers have worked out many of the standard issues in planning a course, but certainly not all of them. Tom McGovern (2000, p. 1-2), an experienced and award-winning teacher, contrasts two approaches to course planning, those of the scientist and the artist.

The *science* of course planning and implementation follows the linear pathway of a research project and its reporting in a journal article. We propose goals and questions for the course and for our students based on the syntheses of available literature on many topics. We choose teaching methods shaped by empirical evidence and self-design. During the semester, we gather systematic observations and perform analyses of multiple performance measures. And finally, we evaluate the efficacy of

our initial questions, the methods we used, and the results obtained, after the term is over, and then begins the cycle of planning for another semester.

The *art* of course planning is more intuitive, like the task of bringing a theater production from concept to performance. Historical antecedents, contemporary audience preferences and sophistication, environment and mood setting, uses of technology, and “how it might play in Peoria” become critical ingredients. Unlike a theater production, however, a faculty member must be playwright, stage designer of light and sound systems, score and lyrics composer, choreographer, director, and lead (often solo) performer.

In the past 100 years, how many times in how many places and for how many different audiences have faculty planned a semester of their various courses? Whether our preferred preparation heuristic is that of scientist, artist or some other unique amalgamation of the two, thinking deeply about the course planning enterprise makes every autumn something to anticipate for its inspirations, rewards, and challenges.

We will approach the topic of planning from the standpoint of a person teaching a course for the very first time with the caveat that there is no reason why the general principles and methods of course design cannot be applied to a course that you already have taught many times. The guidelines to be discussed and critical thinking exercises pursued should prove useful to the instructor faced with the task of teaching a course that has been taught thousands of times before by teachers with any number of different zip codes, intervening personalities, and course objectives. Yet this rubric also works for the academic artisans and scientists striving to teach a novel topic, through innovative means, that maybe no other had considered addressing in years past.

From our perspective, the first step in designing a successful course is to consider all of the varying influences that contribute to your current thinking on how the course should proceed. In reality no course design can be *completely* fresh. Teachers across all disciplines have taken courses before, experienced magical professors, and suffered through courses taught by educators that appear motivated only by leaving for the day as quickly as they can. It is possible you may have even taken the course you are teaching in the past, and have fading memories of what worked and didn't work for you when you were on the other side of the podium. Perhaps, you have sought information by accessing the syllabi of other teachers who have led the course you plan to lead, whether it be those you respect as educators or those who have an office down the hall from you. For the most connected of professors in psychology, you may have even discovered "Project Syllabus," an online resource center that contains a number of excellent models to consult in constructing your own syllabus. You can access this resource by going to the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (<http://www.teachpsych.org>) web site and finding the Office of Teaching Resources in Psychology (<http://www.teachpsych.org/otrp/index.php>).

Thinking about where you've been and where you'd like to go as a teacher represents an important starting point for planning a course consistent with your teaching philosophy. Being true to both the scientific rationale for what you do in the classroom and the personal values, ethics and preferences that define who you are as a person will increase the chances of students having a synchronous course experience where learning objectives are met. Our first activity asks you to be an artist, creative, imaginative, and non-linear.

Activity: Course planning by free association.

Think of a course that you will teach or want to teach some time soon. Write the name of that course at the top of your notepaper. Now free-associate about that course, writing down notes about the thoughts that come to mind. Please do this before reading ahead.

You may have begun with those “must cover topics”, and then included some exciting potential exercises, assignments, films and active learning experiences for students. Readings for the course inevitably creep into the equation early on, and even our unique anxieties about teaching this course may rear their ugly heads. It is not uncommon to think about what you want students to experience and learn through this course from a first-person perspective. We almost imagine how the comments from our teaching evaluations will read or what will be noted on *Rate My Professor.com*. This is the way many teachers begin to think about course design. Thinking like an artist helps us to generate lots of ideas about our courses.

Stating Course Objectives

In order to provide the most complete coverage of course design issues, it is necessary for thoughtful teachers to operate on their courses from the scientist's perspective as well. Of course, scientists can be creative and imaginative too, but at some

point they get more systematic about hypotheses and methods. Our first step in the science of course planning is to develop the objectives. Inevitably, these objectives should be based to a considerable degree on our ever-evolving theory on teaching, the teaching philosophy statement (Korn, 2002).

Critical Thinking Interruption

What does it mean when a therapist or doctor cannot articulate a rationale for treating a patient?

What does it mean when teachers cannot justify their actions in the classroom by referring back to their teaching philosophy?

Is this a valid analogy? Why or why not? How might your feelings on this issue impact your course planning and philosophy articulation?

Activity: Articulating some course objectives.

Write two objectives for the course you have in mind. This activity is just to get you started thinking about the intended outcomes for your course.

Where do course objectives come from? In some cases others give them to you. Your department or college may have had committees that developed course objectives to provide consistency across instructors and semesters. In some fields, professional organizations may specify a curriculum and course objectives, either recommended or

required, for accreditation. Most commonly; however, you will be able to make your own decisions about objectives. Then, your philosophy of teaching should be the most important source. It is the teaching philosophy statement that serves like a treatment plan for the effective therapist or a well-researched theory for the scientist struggling to form viable hypotheses. In short, to enhance accountability for the important work done by teachers, outlining and following a structured, scientific plan is essential (Sikorski & Keeley, 2003). A clearly articulated plan based on an explicitly stated philosophy of teaching enables peers and others to critique how you implement that plan in the classroom, as well as the plan itself. It also gives you a solid basis for self assessment.

Activity: Outline some philosophy-informed course objectives.

For the course you have in mind, write objectives that clearly are based on your philosophy. For example, if your philosophy says that you want your students to think critically about major issues in your field, one objective should reflect that idea. You might begin by identifying the ideas in your philosophy that potentially could relate to one or more course objectives.

The Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives

More than fifty years ago a group of educators gave careful thought to the issue of writing course objectives. They did this in two areas, cognitive and affective objectives (Bloom, et al., 1956; Krathwohl, et al., 1964). The cognitive objectives continue to be influential as ways of analyzing what teachers expect students to be able to do. The

categories are presented from lower or simpler cognitive processes to higher or more complex thinking modes.

<u>Level</u>	<u>Verbs to indicate</u>
KNOWLEDGE	State, list, name, define
COMPREHENSION	Explain, identify, discuss
APPLICATION	Demonstrate, illustrate
ANALYSIS	Analyze, compare, contrast
SYNTHESIS	Create, design, compose
EVALUATION	Evaluate, criticize, value

Activity: Course objective wording.

Look at the objectives you have written for your course so far. Where do they stand in relation to the cognitive taxonomy outlined above? It is likely that your goals for student learning may not have been best explained through the verbs you chose originally. For instance, we realized through this exercise that our choices to identify goals for student learning with words like ‘discuss’ or ‘explain’ did not really capture the true intentions of our teaching philosophy beliefs. Take a crack at changing the verbs used to state your course objectives.

To varying extents, the verbs you use to articulate course objectives may vary based on more than just unique intricacies of individual teaching philosophies. For

example, an introductory course for freshmen may place more emphasis on knowledge, while a senior seminar on the psychological factors underlying the actions of mass murderers may focus more on analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. You also may find that some of your objectives are more affective, which means that they concern developing students' attitudes and values. Other objectives are skill-based, in that you may want students to develop in areas like writing and teamwork. This taxonomy is useful, but not intended to hamper one's own creativity in composing course objectives.

Soon after Bloom and his colleagues developed their taxonomies, there was an active movement to encourage the use of behavioral objectives (Gronlund, 1970; Mager, 1968). The idea made sense to many people then, and it still does. These are the essential ideas for defining behaviorally based course objectives:

- You should be able to specify what you want students to know and do. Behavioral objectives are stated in terms of student performance, not things the teacher will do. For example, "expose" students to something, is what the teacher does, not what the student is expected to do.
- State the specific conditions under which a specific student behavior is expected. For instance, students may be allowed to use a textbook during an exam to evaluate an objective.
- State the expected level of performance for students with specific descriptors (e.g., learn three out of four developmental theories; given a diagram of the human brain, label all four lobes).

Activity: Articulating behavior-based course objectives.

Identify which objectives you have already written that are stated in behavioral terms. Pick three objectives that are not stated behaviorally and restate them so that they are more behavioral in nature.

Critical Thinking Interruption

- *How difficult is it to switch your broad-based cognitive objectives and affective objectives into crystal clear behavioral objectives? What does this say about our own unique teaching philosophy?*
 - *What do you see as some problems with the behavioral objectives approach?*
-

Affective objectives are important too. For many teachers these objectives that concern attitudes and values are implicit; we expect and hope that these things are accomplished but do not state them in our syllabus. And they are most difficult to state in behavioral terms, which means they will be difficult to assess. We also should be concerned about the limits on what we should expect from students in this area. Should we expect students to accept our values? We will address this issue in a later chapter.

Activity: What are your affective objectives?

Identify your affective, or value-based, objectives. If you don't have any value-based objectives articulated, take some time to think about these now. As far as these objectives go, think about whether you consider them to be more or less important than your cognitive and behavioral objectives stated earlier? Will you put these in your syllabus? Why or why not?

Activity: Complete the Teaching Goals Inventory.

The *Teaching Goals Inventory* (Angelo & Cross, 1993) is a useful tool to analyze your course objectives. A goal is broader than an objective. The inventory asks you to think of your goals with respect to specific courses. It is self-scorable and lets you see the importance you place on goals in these areas: higher-order thinking skills, basic academic success skills, discipline-specific knowledge and skills, liberal arts and academic values, work and career preparation, and personal development. It is a good device to get you thinking about what you want to accomplish in your course, and your teaching in general. Complete the Teaching Goals Inventory by going to this web site:

<http://www.uiowa.edu/~centeach/tgi/book.html>.

Comparing your results with your philosophy may reveal instructive inconsistencies. For instance, your philosophy may say that you care about students, yet

the inventory may reveal that personal development is not important for you, which would lead you to think more carefully about what "caring" means.

Link Objectives to Teaching Methods and Assessment

At this point, it is worth thinking about how your objectives are related to your teaching methods. In subsequent chapters, we will work on various methods implemented in the classroom (lecture, discussion, etc.), think more carefully about the objectives for which each method is best suited, and do some planning of individual class periods. Of course, we also must look carefully at how we assess students with assignments and examinations.

Activity: Linking student gains to your course objectives

For now, look at each of your course objectives and imagine what you see students doing when they have achieved that objective. Then think about what you could do to help them get there. This is an exercise in imagination; you are teacher as artist again. This should help you think not only of methods that you might use, but also get you to focus more on students than on yourself.

Next, select two of your most personally important course objectives, then think about the following questions, and jot some notes about your thoughts:

- What are some things that students will have to do in order to achieve the objective?

- What things can you do as a teacher to help students achieve the objective?
 - How will you know if the students have achieved the objective, i.e., what will you assess?
-

The Syllabus

The syllabus is the public presentation of your course plan. You show it to students and to others who want to know what you do in your course, and if you save these over the years they show how you have changed, or not, in your approach to an individual course. It is also yet another manner by which your teaching philosophy is made visible. In short, the syllabus is an important document. The American Psychological Association (2002) considers the syllabus important enough to justify a section (7.03(a)) in the Ethical Principles:

Psychologists take reasonable steps to ensure that course syllabi are accurate regarding the subject matter to be covered, bases for evaluating progress, and the nature of course experiences. This standard does not preclude an instructor from modifying course content or requirements when the instructor considers it pedagogically necessary or desirable, so long as students are made aware of these modifications in a manner that enables them to fulfill course requirements.

The primary audience for this document is your students. The syllabus tells them what the course is about, what is expected of them, and when and how they will be evaluated. It also tells them something about what the teacher is like. We know that students do not pay attention to many things in the syllabus that the teacher thinks are

important, like the course objectives (Becker & Calhoun, 1999), so it is important to talk with the students about the syllabus on the first day of class. On this first day, be sure to say a little about each objective and why you included it, and why you selected a particular textbook. Review the schedule pointing out that you have used bold type to indicate when assignments are due and the dates of examinations. Go over your course policies on attendance, academic honesty, and other issues. Your philosophy should be a guide here. In this talk with students about your course, be human and use humor as it comes naturally to you. But, most importantly, make it clear to students what is expected of them cognitively, behaviorally, and affectively.

One might think that the syllabus is a pretty standard document, but there is considerable variability in what teachers include. This is one list of the major content areas of a syllabus, adapted from Altman and Cashin (1992).

- Course information: Name of the course, course number, credit hours, location of class meetings, class meeting time.
- Instructor information: Name of the instructor, title associated with the instructor (e.g., assistant professor), the instructor's office location and contact information (e.g., phone, e-mail), times and days of office hours.
- Textbook(s) to be used during the course.
- Supplementary readings that are required, recommended, or on reserve in the library.
- Course description: A narrative similar to the college catalog.
- Course objectives.
- Examinations: Format of the examinations, dates of examinations.

- Assignments: Types of assignments and when they are due.
- Grading scale and standards.
- Course calendar: Topics addressed for each class, readings that the students are responsible for during each class, vacation days and special events.
- Course policies: Explicit articulation of policies related to class attendance, tardiness, class participation, missed exams, extra credit, late assignments, academic dishonesty, and classroom etiquette..
- Academic support services: Location and hours for the writing lab, locations and hours for services for students with disabilities, location and hours for counseling center, and resources available for students looking for assistance with their study skills and time management.

We will work on assignments, examinations, and grading in later sections. Here we give some thought to other, more general, items typically found on the syllabus.

Choosing a Textbook and Other Reading

The scientist-teacher would consider textbook selection to be a rational decision among all possible alternatives. In some fields, there may be a dozen or fewer choices and careful comparison is possible, but for many subjects there are too many textbooks to compare all of them. We have to rely on what Nobel laureate, Herbert Simon, called satisficing (Rainey, 2001), which essentially means choosing one that is good enough. To inform the satisficing process, several information-gathering strategies are typically pursued. For instance, one might ask those who taught the course before what book they used and why. Reviews of textbooks are available in several journals. In psychology we are fortunate to have comparisons of textbooks in some course areas where there are

many choices (e.g., introductory psychology textbooks; Griggs, 1999; Griggs, et al., 1999).

These are some dimensions to consider in textbook selection (based on Dewey, 1999).

- Think of some course concepts that typically are difficult for students or are important in your mind as an instructor, and see how well the book explains them.
- Difficulty is determined by reading level and amount of detail. Consider who your students are and what they are prepared to handle. "Easier" books are not necessarily "dumber." That is, it is possible to present an idea in clear, simple language with good examples and facilitate maximum learning in students.
- Interest in a reading source is often facilitated by the quality of the writing. Some books are more fun to read than others. Does the text "draw you in?" Try to skim a chapter. If you can't skim because it's so interesting, that's good.
- Features like marginal definitions, critical thinking activities, self quizzes, and application sections can be good pedagogical devices, and have been found to facilitate student learning of the reading materials (Sikorski, Rich, Saville, Buskist, Davis, & Drogan, 2002).
- The length in pages for the book as a whole, and the length of individual chapters, may also be relevant to your course objectives. Consider how much detail you want students to master and which topics are essential. Think about the balance of breadth and depth that you want and the time you wish for students to spend on other, non-textbook learning activities. Many teachers try to cover too much in a course, which can hamper student learning.

- It's worth remembering that today's textbooks are quite expensive. New editions are published frequently, not because of rapid advances in knowledge, but to overcome the market in used books. Students do appreciate professors who attend to the broader issues like the cost of living that impact their academic lives.
- Consider the supplementary materials that are provided to students (e.g., study guides, CD-ROMs, internet access) and instructors (e.g., videos, PowerPoint disks, computerized testing). You can get a good sense of the quality of supplementary materials and whether you want to require their purchase by students by talking to publishers' representatives or visiting book exhibits at national and regional professional meetings.
- Your end-of-course student evaluations should include their comments on the textbook, which you can use to guide your decision making for the next semester.

Activity: Evaluate some potential textbooks.

Get a copy of two textbooks that pertain to the general topic for a course you plan to teach in the coming months. Apply the criteria described above, and other personal criteria you may have based on your teaching philosophy to identify which book would be better for your purposes in your course.

Decisions about Course Policies

Your course policies, which may seem mundane and sometimes legalistic, serve two important purposes: preventing problems and implementing your philosophy. These

policies show how you want to relate to your students, a topic that could be included in your philosophy. For example, your attendance policy will look different if you think of nurturing students' independence in a climate of trust, rather than teaching responsibility by holding students accountable. Some colleges will give you more choice than others in these areas, but you always will have choices to make that have a lot to do with whether you have problems later in the semester. Any policy should be clear and unambiguous and stated in clear, measurable, behavioral terms. Imagine the worst case, a disciplinary panel that expects you to explain why you failed a student. That will be easier to do if your policy was clear, fair, and followed.

Attendance. Barbara Davis (1993) thinks "attendance should not be mandatory or a factor in your grading policy" (p. 11). The idea is that students should be graded based on their achievement of the course objectives, so your classes should contribute to their learning and give an advantage to those who show up. Otherwise, why is it that you want students to be in that room with you for every class? The purpose should be to help them achieve the objectives, not boost your ego or need for power.

If you decide to have an attendance requirement that includes excused absences, your problem becomes one of deciding what evidence you will require to support the excuse. Students' cars do have flat tires, they do have close relatives who die, they wake up with the flu, and they may have children who get sick. Do you want the burden of evaluating notes from doctors and auto mechanics? It can be done, and may have to be done, if your college requires attendance. However, some teachers prefer not to face this problem in almost every class period, and certainly not in large classes where a lot of time and effort would be involved in taking attendance. Students make choices,

including whether or not to come to your class, and if there is a cost in missing a class or a benefit in showing up then that will control attendance. For more arguments for and against taking attendance see Green (2007).

Missed examinations. This is a tougher problem than attendance because the cost to the student of missing an exam (getting a zero) is high. Faculty find this to be a challenging problem and there is little agreement about the solution. It is a difficult problem because most teachers want to be fair to all students; we want to be sensitive to emergencies and crises in students' lives while not condoning lame or bogus excuses.

These are some policies that various instructors have suggested and implemented:

- Allow students to take a make-up exam if they have “a legitimate excuse.” This may require the teacher to evaluate notes from physicians, funeral directors, and others. Additional implications include the fact that a separate exam must be written and arrangements made for a time and place to give the make-up exam.
- Allow students to drop one exam. This avoids the problems with giving make-up exams; however, doing this means that you will not assess or count performance on one part of your course. The implication here is that mastery of three-quarters of the course content (e.g., if you have four exams) is acceptable. Also, a student may miss more than one exam.
- Other instructors have suggested giving a comprehensive final exam. This exam serves as the make up for students who missed earlier exams, and also represents a chance for other students to improve their grade in the course if they wish to take the cumulative final exam. However, some might argue that the final exam,

within this strategy, serves different purposes for different students, making assessment unequal and unfair.

For more advice on dealing with students who miss exams and assignments see Perlman and McCann (2005).

Late assignments. Give your assignments well ahead of the due dates, and in your course calendar indicate the days on which the assignments will be provided, as well as when they must be submitted. Remind students a week before the due date. Even when you do those things, some students will be late. Most teachers lower the grade for late papers, often by a certain number of points, or percentage points, for each day beyond the due date. Your choice here is to either be firm (you gave plenty of advanced notice) or implement your excuse criteria on a more fluid scale. Don't forget, you could always be forced to articulate your policy during an administrative hearing if a student elects to protest the grade you provided.

Activity: Write a policy for your course concerning attendance, missed examinations, and late assignments.

After you write your policy, using clear behavioral anchors, compare it to your teaching philosophy statement. Are your policies consistent with your teaching philosophy statement? If not, how will you change one or both of them? Why is it important to evaluate the fit between your teaching philosophy and course policies?

Class participation. As an undergraduate Jim was quite shy and would avoid classes where he might be expected to talk, so he has some sympathy for students who find this difficult. As always; however, one's course objectives and teaching philosophy are guides to your practice. In a later section we will see that some important objectives are accomplished best in small group discussions. However, what objective is served by requiring all students to talk in large groups? If you do have a participation requirement you will face not only the problem of the shy student, but of the loquacious one. You also will have to evaluate participation by counting or estimating who talks in each class, and grading the quality of their participation. It is difficult to do that and teach at the same time. Participation should, however, be encouraged rather than required, and in Unit 5 we will discuss ways to do that.

Extra credit. Assignments that are beyond what is usual, normal, expected, or necessary are called extra credit. It is not clear what purposes are served by these assignments. Students who are not doing well in a course should be studying more, not doing additional work. Perhaps students who are doing A work need a further challenge. Whatever the objective, any extra credit assignments should be designed so that all students have an equal opportunity to do the work (Palladino, et al., 1999). For example, asking students to attend a lecture off campus may be more difficult for those without a car.

Critical Thinking Interruption

- *Within academic departments or while enjoying a lunch with a colleague at a conference, disagreements arise frequently regarding course policy issues. For instance, the authors of this Guide disagree as to how these policy issues should be resolved and represented in your syllabi. We have had a lot of fun arguing and fussing and discussing these issues, and thought the readers might too. Knowing that your course objectives and teaching philosophy statement are individualized to your unique beliefs and behaviors as an educator, consider your thoughts and feelings on these particular arguments:*
 - *Some might say that attendance is not optional on the job in the real world, why should attendance be optional or not evaluated in the classroom?*
 - *Some might say that the most vocal and prepared employees are likely to derive tangible and ephemeral rewards from their work, so why shouldn't class attendance be monitored and rewarded in the classroom?*
 - *Can't providing extra credit opportunities broaden students' learning experience within and beyond a course? Whether completing extra credit assignments impact their grade negatively or not, don't we want our students to experience as much as they possibly can? Would they work on the class stuff anyway?*
-

Research participation. Most psychology departments have a "subject pool" to provide participants for faculty and student research projects. Under this system, students in psychology classes sign up for studies and get some amount of course credit after participating. This could be done as extra credit, but more typically it is a regular assignment. However, APA ethical principles say that research participation never should be a requirement, but that an alternative to participation should always be given (American Psychological Association, 2002, section 8.04(b)). That alternative should be equivalent to the research in time and effort, which is always easier said than constructed. After all, is participation in four 15 minute studies really equivalent to writing a four page paper?

Activity: Writing additional course policies

Based on the critical thinking interruptions on controversial topics in course planning, and your own personal thoughts and philosophy, write additional policies for your course. Try to be as comprehensive as possible in outlining the rules. After you write these policies, compare them to your philosophy. Are they consistent? If not, what will you change?

Academic integrity. Academic integrity is a nice phrase to use when saying, "don't cheat." Cheating on examinations is widespread. (This will be covered in more

detail in the chapter on testing and grading.) Plagiarism has been made easier by the availability for sale on the Internet of papers on hundreds of topics. Most colleges have a policy and procedure concerning academic honesty that should be provided to students. Your syllabus should make it clear that you will not tolerate cheating and what will be done to offenders.

Academic integrity is a serious matter, and you want to be fair as well as firm. You may want to convey a sense of trust for students in general, but toughness for cases of cheating. Students value fairness in their teachers; they do not want to see other students have an unfair advantage. If they see a teacher who has a casual attitude toward cheating, some students will take that as a signal to cheat.

Prevention is preferable to punishment. It takes a lot of time to gather the evidence and present it for a disciplinary process, which could become a legal case. Knowing that this effort is required, discourages some teachers from pursuing cheaters. There are steps you can take that will prevent cheating dilemmas from morphing into ethical and/or professional dilemmas:

- Provide a clear statement in your syllabus that defines what you mean by cheating and plagiarism. It is surprising how many students do not know what plagiarism is.
- Be clear on what will happen to cheaters each and every time. Cheaters might be given an F on the particular exam or assignment, or fail the course. Whatever your decision, be consistent, or be prepared to explain your inconsistency.
- Relate your policy to that of the college, including the disciplinary procedure.

- When instances of cheating are discovered, talk with students about reasons for cheating. This shows that you understand the pressure that many students are under. Offer to help them with study problems and personal emergencies or find help from other sources.
- Carefully monitor examinations. Some teachers use exam time to grade papers or read their mail at a desk in front of the room. This signals a casual attitude toward cheating. In fact, Jason asks each student to bring all of their bags, beverages, and pocketbooks to the front of the room before every examination. In our minds, this sends a clear message that every precaution will be taken to ensure that the playing field during examinations is level for all parties. The syllabus should state that tests will be monitored carefully.
- Reinforce your concerns about cheating each time you provide assignments and create assignments that make cheating difficult. Make it clear to students that you are a teacher who cares about honesty and integrity.

Activity: Write an academic honesty statement for your course.

State what you expect from students and what will happen if they violate your policy. Consult your college policy and refer your students to it.

Classroom etiquette. Although not typically listed as an element of the syllabus, we include a statement that indicates the value we place on respect: our respect for students and our expectation that they respect each other and us. This includes coming to class on time, being a good listener, not talking while others are speaking, and doing the

reading before class. We think that it is what you say and do in this area that has more of an effect than what is written in the syllabus. Being a model of respect gains respect.

Grading. Students will put more effort into activities that get them "points." They want to know what their assignments and exams are worth, and how many points they need to achieve a hoped-for grade. Each exam and assignment will be assigned some number of points, and thus an importance weight. Think about how these weights are related to your course objectives. They should reflect what you think is most important. Most teachers then determine grade cut-offs, with the number of steps defined by college policy concerning the use of plus and minus grades. Typically, 90% of the total points is an A. There is a illusion of objectivity here. This and other grading issues will be discussed in Unit 7.

Schedule. You might label your course calendar a "tentative schedule" to allow for a class getting involved in a topic for longer than expected. However, exam dates always should be firm and printed in bold. The schedule should let students know what topics will be covered with the hope that they will read the assigned material for that date.

Planning Course Modules

Each section or unit of your course also requires planning using an approach similar to that used to plan your whole course. In his course on preparing to teach psychology, Victor Benassi has students design teaching modules (Benassi, et al., 1994). We recommend that you use that approach in planning sections of your course.

A teaching module these components:

1. Statement of objectives. Use the same process here as you did for planning your course objectives.
2. List of unit resources. What will you draw on for your class presentation and activities?
3. General outline of the major topics of this unit.
4. A detailed outline with the specifics of your presentation and class activities. This is your script for the unit.
5. Assessment and its relation to the objectives. Benassi recommends writing a “table of specifications” that relates individual test items to the objectives. You could do that with other forms of assessment, as well.

This might be a lot of work when you do it for the first time. However, you then will have a file for each module that can be modified and to which new material can be added, including evaluation of effectiveness.

Vision

What it would be like to teach a really great course? You would have done your best as a teacher, the students would have been involved and inspired, and the materials from that class would bring admiration from colleagues. Everyone would know that it had been a great experience. Having a vision for the perfect course is one way to set standards for both process and outcomes, and also to motivate you to improve your teaching.

Activity: What does your perfect course look and feel like?

Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Visualize yourself in a classroom and imagine what you would be doing and how you would feel if this were the best class you ever taught. You know, that perfect class. Imagine your course evaluations at the end of the semester; what will they say about this great course? Think in general about what would make this your perfect course. Do this until you get tired of it. Make some notes on what you thought about, then write a vision statement for The Perfect Course.

The First Day of Class

Critical Thinking Interruption

- **Visualize the perfect first day of class for one of your courses.**
 - **What are you doing? What are you thinking about?**
 - **How are the students acting? What are the students thinking about?**
-

The first day is one of the most important days of your semester. Some teachers may see it as a semi-off day that takes little thoughtful preparation; they just bring a stack of papers and hand them out or have an assistant do that. These teachers are missing an

opportunity to get a good start in accomplishing important objectives. These objectives may not be stated in your syllabus, but nevertheless are related to the success of your course: presenting a positive impression of yourself, encouraging student participation, modeling your style, and clarifying items in your syllabus. We include a discussion of the first day in this unit on planning because this day is a kind of meta-class that previews what the semester will be like. You reveal your plan to your students and begin to implement that plan.

Even after many years of teaching, teachers get a little nervous when facing a class for the first time. One solution is to write your name on the chalkboard, hand out the syllabus, make a reading assignment, and leave the room, thus postponing your nervousness to the next class. But you can do better than that. Good teachers use various approaches on the first day, depending on their style. McKeachie (2002, Chapter 3) has some good suggestions that may work for you, including the use of "ice breakers" and problem posting.

There is great variety in the types of activities you might pursue, and this variety is shaped by one's teaching style, personality, and views on student learning. For instance, Jim has students complete a Background Questionnaire that asks them things like their hometown, hobbies, and favorite TV show. He then uses this as a basis for students introducing themselves to the class (when the class is small) or identifying students with shared interests (large classes). You also should tell the students some things about yourself; you are a person too.

In contrast, Jason pursues some methods that are a bit more controversial perhaps. Although he's not sure where he borrowed this method from, he typically leads students

in a progressive muscle relaxation exercise and attempts to convince them that they can do powerful things with their minds through the use of psychological principles. He then has the students write a word to describe a celebrity that they despise. He then has the students stand up and visualize what their student partner's word is on their arm through the use of loud mantras, holding hands, jumping on one foot to facilitate concentration, etc. At the end of the exercise, when no one guesses their partner's word, Jason introduces the lesson of the exercise, which is to never accept anything that anyone tells you in this class without thinking critically about that issue. This exercise usually evolves into a discussion about why psychologists get a bad rap in society and human biases in everyday decision making. The objective of the exercise is to encourage questions and meta-cognition throughout the semester.

Whatever your style, both of us advise coming to class early on the first day. Being the first person that students see and greet communicates that you are approachable and accountable and excited about the upcoming semester. Of course, whatever first day practice you pursue should be consistent with your teaching philosophy.

Perhaps the most important thing that we do on the first day is to begin to learn the students' names. As they used to say on the old "Cheers" television show, you feel welcome where everybody knows your name. Not only does this help to build better relationships with students, it also helps to identify students when there are problems. In small classes this task is done easily by rehearsing the names during class and making associations with students' physical and behavioral characteristics. In large classes, Jim takes photographs of students in groups of six, records the names on each photo, and rehearses them at home while referring to the Background Questionnaires. This has

worked for Jim in classes of up to 100, although without regular rehearsal you might forget about 30% of the names by the end of the semester. Students are pleased when they see teachers make this kind of effort, and it also becomes an example for a unit on memory.

Business must also be pursued on your first day. For instance, McKeachie (2002), and other experts on teaching suggest explaining your policies to students, clarifying your expectations for the course to prevent problems, and introducing the subject matter in a novel way. At the end of your first class, stay in the room for a few minutes to help students who have questions or problems.

Activity: Revised notions of the first day of class.

Based on your thoughts both before and after reading this section, revise and record your views of how the first day of class should run. Pay particular attention to the limits of your own personality and your most important course objectives and teaching philosophies. Also, try being creative and create a memorable first day experience.

Looking Ahead

We hope your first day of class goes well. Then you can look forward to the rest of the semester. The following units are intended to help you put your teaching methods into practice, assess your students' learning, deal with problems, evaluate your teaching,

and contemplate your future as a teacher. We will jump into this by working on lecturing, which is the most commonly used teaching method.

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Unit 4

Class Presentations

Objectives:

- Understand the purposes of the lecture.
- Know the varieties of lecturing.
- Know what makes a lecture effective.
- Know what skills you want to develop and begin to do that.
- Plan a class presentation.

Get an image of someone who is teaching. Now imagine yourself teaching. What were these teachers doing? We would bet that in most of our images of teachers students are seated, with or without a glazed look in their eyes, and the teachers are standing in the front of a room and talking. Like millions before them, these teachers are giving a lecture.

Ask teachers what educational methods they use in most of their classes. A frequent response will be the lecture-discussion method. When teachers are observed as they implement that method, they are talking more than 80% of the time and some of their students are talking (not necessarily discussing) less than 20% of the time (Nunn, 1996). We teachers have historically used the lecture method a lot and will likely continue to use it, which is why we place it first in these sections on delivery of instruction.

What is a lecture? What's the use of lectures?

What is this "it" that we are calling "the lecture?" There really are variations, which is why we refer to lectures as a heterogeneous collection of class presentations or teacher-centered techniques. The political speech and religious sermon usually are pure

lectures. Yet, in the classroom, teachers almost always add some type of visual aid to complement their lectures, like using dry erase boards or Power Point slides. More elaborate visual aids, including videotapes and demonstrations also add more variety, but still are teacher-centered. Perhaps, one of the most important factors in the effectiveness of a class presentation is maintaining student attention, so sometimes asking and answering student questions can be helpful too (Yoshida, 1992). In the remainder of this unit the word lecture will refer to well-designed class presentations centered on the teacher, and not to the lecture as a speech.

Donald Bligh (2000), in his book-length review of the research titled, *What's the Use of Lectures?*, begins his first chapter with this conclusion: "The lecture is *as effective* as other methods for transmitting information. Most lectures are *not* as effective as discussion for promoting thought" (p. 3, italics added). He also concludes that lectures are "relatively ineffective" for teaching values, inspiring interest, for personal and social adjustment, and for teaching behavioral skills. In short, if your goal as an educator is to promote the storage of knowledge, lecturing seems to be a viable method of instruction. However, if your goal is to facilitate critical thinking, influence others to action (Sikorski & Keeley, 2003) or keep students' attention for extended periods of time, you might be best advised to pursue another mode of instruction. That's pretty discouraging news about this most widely used teaching method, but we will see that there still is something to be said for its continued use (Benjamin, 2002). For starters, the lecture is here to stay within academia, thus we should probably know why we do it and how to do it better.

Critical Thinking Interruption

- *Under what circumstances do [or would] you lecture and why?*
 - *Do you feel uncomfortable if you ignore the experts quoted before?*
 - *How do these views and tendencies surrounding lecturing meld with your evolving teaching philosophy?*
-

Why Lecture?

Teacher talking time is correlated positively with class size. Larger classes tend to make some student-centered, active learning methods (e.g., group activities, class demonstrations, torrid debates) more difficult to implement, but we will see in a later section that there always are opportunities for student involvement even in very large classes, so class size should not be the primary criterion for lecturing.

Jim had a colleague, who loved his course topic, say that he could not miss a class because, "I have a lot to tell them." Providing information that we want students to know is one reason to lecture, and it appears that there is research to support the lecture as one effective way to do this, although not the only way. Some information may be so new that it has not yet been included in a textbook. Other information is scattered around across many sources, making it such that the teacher is best suited to integrate and summarize this important information for students. Even lecturing on material that already is in the textbook can be helpful. The instructor can rephrase an idea that may need clarification, and can add examples adapted to the background and interests of the

students (McKeachie, 2002, Chapter 5). Keep in mind that transmitting information is the objective here; other methods probably are better for other objectives.

Many teachers have an image of themselves as exciting, inspirational classroom performers (Friedman, 1995), and some experts think that lectures can motivate students and stimulate their interest in the subject matter (e.g., Cashin, 1985; McKeachie, 2002). Bligh (2000) reviewed 31 studies and concluded that lectures rarely influence the lives of students in as powerful of a way as we teachers might fantasize. When the measure is increased interest, lectures were found to be more effective than discussion or other methods in only 13% of the studies, but less effective in 52%, with no significant difference in the other studies.

The conclusion seems clear: lectures, as broadly defined here, represent one good way to transmit some informational objectives some of the time. However, lectures should, by no means, be viewed as a tool for all purposes in the college classroom. Lectures do not typically rock the worlds of our students in ways that we might imagine, and they certainly have not been found to instill analytical thinking or critical synthesis skills in our students.

Let us confess to another purpose for lectures; boosting the ego of the teacher. We have no quantitative data on this, only many conversations over the years with teachers who talk about the “buzz” they get from performing well in front of a class. For some, performing well might mean getting students to ask a lot of questions or excel on tests. Other educators are fueled by the occasional student chuckles (Pollio, 2002), or the actual feeling of being in the moment to such a degree that things go “just right” (Halonen, 2002). Whatever the type of motivator, they all can serve as powerful

reinforcers for lecturing. The fact that these rewards are not experienced or earned in every class adds to the durability of the behavior change. In short, intermittent reinforcement, like that provided by slot machines, is extremely effective in maintaining behavior. This is fine if it enhances the teacher's enthusiasm and accountability, because that will help maintain the students' attention. But it is a problem if it blinds the teacher to more effective ways of accomplishing course objectives.

Ludy Benjamin (2002) provided an important perspective on why we lecture that speaks to the roles of teacher and student.

The lecture clearly acknowledges the scholarly authority of the teacher -- an authority that most college students feel they have paid to see. It offers the teacher the best chance to illustrate the creativity, magic, and insight that are components of great lectures. It offers faculty the opportunity to inspire and students the opportunity to be moved, enlightened, or changed in dramatic ways (p. 66). Benjamin sees this as an "awesome responsibility . . . so if you lecture learn to do it well; if you do it well, learn to do it better" (p. 66).

Activity: Think further about why you lecture

Based on the discussion pursued in this unit, revise your thoughts about why you lecture and record these observations. Again, be cognizant of how your thinking fits within the broader framework of your evolving teaching philosophy statement.

Planning Your Presentation

The approaches of the artist and the scientist are used again in planning individual classes, just as they were utilized in articulating your teaching philosophy. An artistic perspective comes from Joseph Lowman (1995) who describes "college classrooms as dramatic arenas" (p. 100), in which the teacher is the lead actor, the stage manager, and the author of the play. The great lecturers who we remember from our student days had mastered these skills through extensive practice and they worked hard to plan their classes. It is our belief that most teachers, if they are willing to put in the many hours of work required, can become very good, maybe even great, lecturers. To continue with the metaphor of the theater, think of these aspects of classroom performance: acting, staging, and the play itself.

Acting

Here, the first problem for some of us is simply getting on the stage. You may have stage fright, that common anxiety about public speaking. We now think of ourselves as pretty good presenters, but when we started out as teachers, both of us were terrified in front of a class. Here are some things that might help if you are anxious about the prospect of lecturing.

- Learn to relax. You can use self-help books and tapes that teach you various relaxation techniques, or you can invest in a few sessions with a therapist. This is an example of the time and effort required to become a good lecturer (Friedman, 1995). Learning to relax takes a lot of practice for some of us, but you must learn to do it or you may never make it to the stage.

- Begin to lecture in small steps. Clinicians call this technique systematic desensitization. You develop a hierarchy of steps toward your ultimate goal, which might be to lecture in front of a class of 100 students. The first step might be to imagine yourself talking to a group of several friends. Later steps might be talking for five minutes in a small seminar, then in a class of 25 students. After you learn to relax, you go through the steps in this hierarchy while you are relaxed, until you feel comfortable with your class of 100 students.
- Understand that in most classes students are your friends. They want you to do well because then class will be more interesting, and they also sympathize with you because fear of public speaking is so common. Later in this unit we will suggest things that you can do to build on this initial student sympathy.
- Finally, practice speaking whenever you get the chance. You might have a few favorite mini-lectures that you can volunteer to give in other teachers' classes. If you are a graduate student, use your seminar presentations to develop your presentation skill.

Once you are able to get on stage, you have to be able to communicate well. You must speak loud enough to be heard throughout the classroom, you must be articulate (no mumbling, no monotone), and your speech must be coherent (organized, using complete sentences). Once again, this takes practice and requires feedback so you can identify what you need to improve. I recommend these resources:

- Lowman (1995), Chapter 4, "Analyzing and improving classroom performance." In addition to good advice, you will find a "communication assessment rating form" (p. 125-128) that you can use to analyze a videotape of your performance.

- Use a book of advice on public speaking. One that we like is *I Can See You Naked* by Ron Hoff (1992). The title comes from the old advice about overcoming fear of speaking by imaging your audience in an embarrassing circumstance, but Hoff has a lot of helpful advice about effective presentations.

Staging

Your costume can be a creative aspect of staging. You create a different impression in business clothes than in casual attire, and perhaps insult your audience if you appear sloppy, unless you do that to create some effect. Occasionally, a real costume can make a powerful impression. Jim's colleague, Belden Lane, a professor of theological studies, dresses in a robe to look like Francis of Assisi, when he lectures on that saint. He also brings his dog to class because of his role as St. Francis . . . , but the dog often "upstages" professor Lane, so be careful how you select your props. Costumes and props will work only if they help students make associations between these things and the ideas, and maintain their attention. If your presentation is boring, it will not matter who you look like.

The Script

Lowman (1995) recommends that we create dramatic suspense in our lectures by telling a story that gives "listeners a sense of unfolding and discovery" (p. 124). We must be good storytellers.

To tell any story well, the narrator must become almost as caught up in the plot as the listeners. Even if they have told a story countless times, masters of the ancient storytellers' art grow excited at hearing the tale once again. They save the

big surprises until the end, laying the groundwork early by posing questions from the opening moments and dropping cues along the way (Lowman, 1995, p. 124).

In writing your play (lecture) you can use other devices from the theater in addition to costumes, so that your audience enjoys the performance. For instance, visual effect and vivid demonstrations are often well received. Friedman (1995) suggests that the teacher can serve as a great actor in several other ways:

- Great actors and teachers move around and use a lot of hand gestures. These movements foster attention and interest in audiences.
- Great actors work hard to make their performances seem especially unique each time. This is often very difficult when you have played an acting role or taught a particular class about a zillion times. However, it is those great lecturers that make it seem as if the words they utter have never been spoken before and have never been said so meaningfully.
- Great actors and great teachers are passionate and emotional at work. In Friedman's words, they "feel the content."

For example, when teaching the chapter on psychological disorders, Jim typically plays the role of a person with a variety of anxiety problems related to the weather, while descriptions of severe weather forecasts from the National Weather Service are projected on the screen. Students are divided into groups, whose task is to use their textbook to diagnose the disorder and speculate on possible causes. In this demonstration, we see enthusiasm, uniqueness, and activity.

The Science of Class Presentations

In this section we elaborate on our premise that the purpose of the lecture presentation is to transmit information. Other methods will be used for other course objectives, like critical thinking. It is important to remember that all learning objectives fit together. For example, we want students to think critically about something, namely the information that we have transmitted to them via lecture. So, seeing the interrelatedness of objectives we seek for students, we want to avoid the artificial isolation of course objectives. Transmitting information becomes a more complex and thoughtful objective, including being able to organize, integrate, and summarize that information.

Remember that we will be assessing our students' learning in numerous ways. We will have to design examinations and other assessments that show whether students have the information and can do something with it. In this sense, Bligh's (2000) research on factors like attention, memory, and motivation to learn seem particularly relevant. In short, these basic principles make a difference in following lectures, and thus also influence the beginning stages of one's critical thinking development. In order to achieve critical thinking objectives, it is important to not ignore the micro-skills required to instill the information on which students will reflect.

Activity: Planning a teacher-centered presentation.

This is an extended activity with six parts designed to help you plan a class presentation that is teacher-centered (i.e., a lecture with some other stuff). You will need some content to use for this class, so your first task is to decide on a topic that you might want to present in a 50-minute class. Do not be grandiose. Pick a relatively small topic and you can expand upon it later if you desire. For example, theories of personality is too big of a topic, but trait theories would work.

Second, decide what information you want to transmit about your topic. Your task here is to state specific objectives for the class. What are the terms, facts, and ideas that you want students to know? How will you know that your students know these things? For example, you may want students to list and define the "big five" personality traits. At what cognitive level do you want your students to use the information? Perhaps you just want them to remember things, like the five traits, or you may want them to give examples of each thing. In Jim's lecture on personality traits, he presented the heredity-environment issue. One of his objectives might be that students should be able to state one research finding that supports each side of this issue, and at a higher cognitive level to evaluate the importance of this issue for raising one's children. In short, state your specific objectives for the topic you will present.

Third, you need to organize the information. Clear organization will help both you and your students remember the material. There are several forms of organization (see Bligh) including tree or hierarchical structures and concept maps. If you prefer the dramatic form, try to present your topic as a story. We can imagine telling a story about a

family of five adopted children, each of whom has one dominant personality trait. Now, create an individualized outline or structure for your topic.

Fourth, students will understand and remember the information better if it is meaningful to them. Create examples that are vivid and related to students' experiences. That means you will have to learn something about their experience, which you may have done in a background questionnaire on the first day of class or by talking with them before and after class. There are some topics for which it will be difficult to find examples in students' lives, so you may have to create a common experience in class. In a unit on perception, Jim used a demonstration of speech played backwards, which is something few students ever have heard. For now, write three examples that you will use in your plan.

Fifth, information will be transmitted to students only if they are paying attention to it. You already have made the material interesting by organizing it and making it meaningful to your students. You also will hold their attention if you vary sensory input. Move around the room, but in a way that fits your presentation. Pacing back and forth can become boring, but moving up the aisle and then pointing back to the front of the room may be dramatic. Of course, you should use visual aids from the old-fashioned chalk board to newer technologies like videotape and PowerPoint. Be careful not to overuse these things, however, or you may get the response that one teacher received on an evaluation that the class featured "death by PowerPoint."

Mixing in demonstrations and student participation will provide variety that can maintain attention. We will work more with student activities in our section on active learning. Demonstrations are visual examples that you either perform yourself or ask

someone else to do either live or on videotape. Be sure that they work before you use them; mechanical devices may fail or someone may forget to bring the right prop, and then the nicest reaction you will get from students is pity. There also is a risk in demonstrations that are so dramatic that students will remember only the dramatic effect but not the principle it exemplifies. Review your outline and find places where you can use devices to vary stimulation to increase attention. What will you do when your big moment arrives?

Sixth, write lecture notes. This is a homework assignment, not something for you to do now. Do not write out your notes verbatim, using complete sentences. That is almost universal advice from experts on lecturing. It is better to use an outline to help you remember what you want to say. Some of us need more support than other teachers do from our notes, and it doesn't hurt to have the words there, but you will give a better presentation the more natural you appear to be. Your notes should remind you not only of the content of your lecture, but also give you stage directions to remind you when to move, talk more slowly, pause for effect, or anything else that makes a good show.

You now have a plan for a lecture that will effectively transmit the information in your objectives. You have chosen the content, organized it clearly, and have designed ways to maintain students' interest and attention. At some time you will have to deliver this lecture. Then there two other characteristics of you as a teacher that many studies (e.g., Murray, 1983) have shown will enhance your effectiveness in the classroom: enthusiasm and rapport.

Enthusiasm is conveyed in a number of ways in your speech and gestures. You can tell when a speaker is tired and bored by a topic or when that person is excited about it. Not all of us, however, are naturally exuberant, and teachers can not be passionate about every topic in their course. You can learn to be enthusiastic about anything, although it takes some effort. McKeachie thinks that "like other learned behaviors, this takes practice" and that it will help if you "put into each lecture something that you are really excited about" (2002, p. 53). This is yet another example of how becoming a good teacher takes extra work.

Rapport means having a good, but not necessarily close, relationship with your students. Joseph Lowman (1995) has an excellent section on "fostering personal relationships with students" (p. 66ff). There are two important things that he recommends. First, learn your students' names. This is easy to do when you have less than forty students, and more challenging in large classes of up to 100 students, so try this. Take pictures of students in groups of six. One person in the group holds a 5" by 8" card with the group number on it. After the picture is taken, an assistant writes the names on the students on the back of the card corresponding to their position in the picture. Later, you match the cards to the pictures and practice associating their names. You usually can get about 40 students' names learned by the next class, and retain 60-70 names or more during the semester. Students are impressed not only when you are successful in remembering their names and maybe even something about them, but also in your effort to do this. We are sad to say, students often are impressed because most of their other teachers don't do this, even in small classes.

The other thing Lowman recommends is that you come to class early and talk with the students who are there. If you have gotten background information, you can talk about their interests, as well as current events on campus or even the assignment for that day. All these things indicate that you care about your students, and if that is part of your teaching philosophy then these are ways to make your ideals real.

Technology

This is a blessing and a curse for teachers. So much is available to enhance a class presentation and also to screw it up. It will take you time to learn any technology that is new to you, and even more time to figure out how to use it well in your teaching. Then, having learned it, you may be assigned to a classroom that is not equipped for the use of this new technology. Some systems require that students must learn something new on top of the content of your course. So proceed with caution, but do proceed.

In deciding when to use any technology consider this advice from a prestigious group of educators in a 1972 report on what they called “the fourth revolution” (Carnegie Commission, 1972). Use technology when:

- The teaching-learning task to be performed [is] essential to the course of instruction to which it is applied.
- The task to be performed could not be performed as well – if at all – for the students served without the technology contemplated.

In other words use it to accomplish important objectives, not just to show off.

Today, an attempt to review technologies available to facilitate one’s ability to transmit information to others in an effective fashion, represents an extremely tall task. In reality, it would likely take us so long to list all of the technologies, that the modernity of

the technologies reviewed would become stale by print time. As such, we'll take our best shot at outlining two of the hippest technological resources out there for 21st century teacher centered lecturers.

PowerPoint Slides

Research pertaining to the use of PowerPoint slides in psychology to facilitate student learning and student course satisfaction more generally, revealed that students exposed to PowerPoint slides appeared to benefit more from those lectures (Kulik, Kulik, & Cohen, 1980). However, more recent research, suggests the need for caution in stating that PowerPoint slides represent the holy grail of teaching. Erin Hardin (2007) notes that, though PowerPoint slides provide catchy visual, and sometimes auditory, aids to facilitate student absorption in the class material, there is more to the story than that. More specifically, Hardin warns that good teaching continues to matter, with or without PowerPoint slides. Failing to give a good lecture and/or failing to incorporate your PowerPoint aids into your good lecture, can just as easily result in negative learning outcomes for students as the lecturer who fails to include any pedagogical aids to supplement their presentation. In short, Hardin's (2007) lesson appears to be that we should not use PowerPoint slides as a crutch or a substitute for good teaching. This same rule is likely to work well when thinking about the implementation of any technological resource.

Using the Internet in Class

The Internet can provide a range of supporting materials for a lecture. For instance, one teacher might prefer to occasionally give their lecture online and spare students from coming to class. Less radical instructors might prefer merely pulling tables,

figures, pictures, and videos from the Internet to support a lecture (Weiten, 2002). Online chat rooms might allow a teacher to present information about what “the masses” are thinking about a lecture topic, which might influence the way that students understand and envision using the information.

But, it’s important to realize how the current zeitgeist calls for instructors to tap the full bounds of the Internet to support teacher-centered ventures in class. As an example, in a witty little piece from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* entitled from YouTube to You Niversity, Jenkins (2007) articulates how Internet resources like *YouTube* are revolutionizing the social, recreational, and analytical lives of adolescents and young adults. Gone are the days where lecturers would include figures and pictures to be consistent with research documenting the importance of presenting information through multiple sensory modalities to fuel student learning. Today, it’s not the number of sensory modalities that are tapped during a lecture, it’s the *power* of those resources to garner student attention in a mind-blowing technological age.

Once again, we recommend going to the STP Internet site for extensive information on how to use various forms of technology:

<http://www.teachpsych.org/resources/index.php>

In this index go to both “classroom tips” and “pedagogical innovations.” The latter category includes using multimedia and software tools.

Getting Feedback on Your Lecture

A lot of work goes into planning a class and delivering a lecture, so it is important to find out what you did well and what needs to be improved. Your sources for this feedback are your students, your colleagues, and yourself.

Students

You stated your objectives in terms of what you want students to know, so obviously you should find out how much they know. You can find this out when you give them an examination, but if you find out sooner, you can do something that will help students perform better on the exams. Use the Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) developed by Angelo and Cross (1993). One popular CAT is “the muddiest point,” in which students answer the question, at what point in today’s class were you most confused” or “what idea was most difficult for you to understand today?” The responses can be reviewed quickly after class and “muddiest points” can be cleared up in the next class.

Students also can give you their view of the dramatic aspects of your presentation. You can ask them whether they enjoyed your lecture, were able to maintain their attention, and found your examples helpful. Even before they answer your questions, you will be able to see their response to your presentation by their non-verbal behaviors, like how many are sleeping. Do not focus on the few students who seem tired or bored when most of your students appear attentive and are responding as you had hoped. Some students are, in fact, tired because of illness or working a night job. However, when most students seem to be lost, this is a good time to use a CAT or even stop lecturing, and ask students why you are not reaching them.

Colleagues

Ask a peer to come to class and observe your teaching. In a later section we will look at specific observation techniques. The least helpful observer is the one who visits your class and then, when you ask for comments, simply says, "that was a really good class. I liked your example of the ball and chain." You learn nothing from these general, courteous comments. You do want an observer who is not threatening. One of the worst situations is when a department chair makes once-a-semester, unsolicited visits to the classes of untenured faculty to "evaluate" their teaching. If you have access to a teaching center on your campus there may be trained observers who will make observations that are not connected to your salary or promotion, or your reappointment if you are a graduate TA.

Videotape your teaching. That can be threatening for most of us, but it provides a record of what happened that you can review yourself and discuss with someone else. Davis (1993) has a good section on reviewing videotapes of teaching. We suggest that you watch the tape three times. First, watch the tape by yourself to get over your mild embarrassment at your personal habits that only you will notice and to get a general sense of where you need advice. Next, ask someone else to watch it with you and pay attention to those aspects that concern you the most. Finally, review it by yourself again, stopping the tape at places where your advisor made suggestions and thinking about what you will do differently when you give this lecture again.

Yourself

You will have good days, OK days, and discouraging days. Rather than running off to a new task in your research lab or library, sit and reflect on the class just finished.

What do you think worked well or poorly, and why do you think that happened? You may want to make notes on your thoughts and put these with your notes that day's class, so you can review it next year.

Looking Ahead

In the next two Units we will work on methods that are student-centered: discussion, writing, and other forms of active learning. Before going ahead to those units, we urge you to take another look at your teaching philosophy and the objectives in your practice syllabus. How well do teacher-centered methods fulfill your philosophy and objectives?

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Unit 5

Managing Class Discussions

Objectives

1. Distinguish discussion from other forms of student participation.
2. Understand the purposes of small group discussions.
3. Know how to manage effective discussions.
4. Know how to prevent problems in discussions.
5. Develop a plan for a class discussion.

The previous unit was about classes in which the teacher does almost all the talking while students are passive note-takers. In this chapter and the one that follows, students take center stage as active learners. Class discussions are one important way to get students more involved in their own learning. Other forms of active learning will be the topic of the next chapter.

Critical Thinking Interruption

- *What makes a discussion a good discussion? Think here of discussions in general, not only those that take place in class.*
-

Discussion Objectives

Most class discussions really involve relatively little discussion. Occasionally during a lecture, the teacher asks a question then waits for someone to answer. Most students try to look busy by taking notes (on what?) and wait for this irritation to pass. A

few carry the load of the discussion, as they probably have during the entire semester. In a study of 20 different classes involving a total of 579 students, Nunn (1996) found that the median percentage of time spent in student participation per class was 2.28%, and the median percentage of students who spoke was 25.46%. That is, most students do not talk during "discussions" and those who do, do not talk much. Well, so what? If your objective is the transmission of information, then you shouldn't waste time listening to people who do not have that information, unless you just want to use student talk to help maintain attention. However, there are other objectives that are accomplished best by involving all students in a discussion:

- If all or most of the students participate during class discussions, you can be better assured that the majority of your students are doing more than just memorizing facts. Rather, they may be thinking about ways to use course information in individual ways such as applying the facts to their own lives. After all, the major impetus behind the push for more active learning approaches in the classroom is the fact that students forget memorized facts and are more likely to recall meaningful lessons (Sikorski & Keeley, 2003; Sikorski, 2005).
- Emotional processing has been identified as a key factor leading to change across many different types of psychotherapies for many different types of presenting problems (Yalom, 2002). Given the parallels between the factors required for effective therapy and for effective teaching (Sikorski & Keeley, 2003), talking about feelings and opinions can serve as an agent of change for students in the ways that they think about problems.

- Active learning activities are pursued by most teachers in hopes of encouraging students to synthesize the stuff that they now are learning with other stuff that they have already learned. However, most students are not focused on learning to reason effectively or grow as a thinker. Learning to think requires practice and for critical thinking to occur, problem solving has to take place and decisions have to be made (Halpern, 2002). McKeachie (2002, p. 30) says that discussion gives students practice in thinking when they evaluate the logic of their own and others' positions, and develop applications of principles.
- Discussion and other active learning activities set the stage for students to explore varying perspectives on a given topic when a diversity of viewpoints is present in a group. For example, men and women will learn more about gender role development when both genders are represented in a discussion, and even more when there is a diversity of cultural backgrounds.
- Finally, discussion is an occupational skill, like writing. Students should be aware that in business and professional life they will be taking part in discussions where their performance will be important.

If you want even more reasons to use discussion, see Brookfield's (1999, p. 22-23) list of fifteen benefits associated with using discussion methods in the classroom.

Managing Effective Discussions

"A discussion is an exchange of ideas where all members of the group have an opportunity to participate and are expected to do so to some degree" (Kramer & Korn, 1999, p. 99). Even if the teacher did very little talking in a class, there are limits to the

extent to which all students can be involved in a discussion, unless the class is divided into small groups, and that is what is often needed to give all students an opportunity to participate.

Segmenting classes in this way is not easy for some teachers for several reasons. First, we are not used to doing classes this way, so the process seems awkward. The intact class, like the lecture method, is like a comfortable old shoe that we can just slide in and out of at our discretion. Second, we are uncomfortable when we have less control over what happens in the class; after all, students might talk about dating rather than moral development. Even more importantly today, topics like sexual orientation, ethnic diversity, religious diversity, and gender roles are topics that generate a lot of student interest, but many teachers shy away from encouraging too much discussion about these types of topics out of fear that someone might say something really offensive. Third, we worry about students who won't talk at all and those who talk too much. All these problems can be managed effectively.

Forming Groups

Size. Discussions are most effective in groups of 4-6. In theory, a class of any size can be divided into subgroups, but there are real limits of time and space. There should be at least a little distance between the groups to prevent cross-talk during the discussion, and not all rooms are large enough for that. Time is a factor if you want each group to report its conclusion at the end of the discussion, although that is not always necessary.

Flexibility. In some rooms, seats are bolted to the floor and they may be in fixed rows with long tables extending across the row. That is challenging but it will not

prevent using small groups. For example, a group of four is formed when two students turn around and work with the pair behind them. A large part of the challenge here is overcoming the norms of the classroom that everyone has to maintain fixed rows.

Violating these norms can be fun and instructive for the class.

Choosing group members. Students learn more when the diversity of its members is greatest, so if possible select groups by counting off rather than allowing students to choose their own groups. Sometimes it is best to assign students to groups to insure diversity. In a discussion of gender issues, for example, you may want groups that include (or do not) both men and women. Further, if you have the time, it might also be useful to form the groups on some measure of skill level or class performance. This type of intervention might enable students who are struggling with concepts to discover how successful students are thinking about the class material.

Promoting Participation and Preventing Problems.

When Jim was an undergraduate, he was a shy student, so much so that he would avoid classes where he might have to talk a lot in class and give oral reports. For that reason he has a lot of empathy for students who are anxious about talking in class. Tom Kramer and Jim (1999, p. 101) have these suggestions concerning shy students:

- The course description should make it clear that discussion is expected, and this should be emphasized in the first class meeting.
- Help should be available for shy students either from the instructor or the counseling center.

- Be accepting of degrees of participation. Students who want to confront their shyness need time to develop, and all of us have days when things are going terribly, and we need to be quiet.

You also should be aware that shyness may not be the only reason students do not want to talk in class. Some may have speech disorders. Your university disability counselor should have notified you about these cases and provided suggestions for how to help these students participate. Some other students may be from a culture that does not approve of public self presentation. You can accept that and find other ways for those students to express their views.

Most students are willing to talk, so the problem becomes how to promote full participation in discussions, which means active listening as well as talking, and preventing several problems that commonly occur in groups. These four things will help: establishing clear ground rules, clarifying instructor and student roles, training in discussion skills, and allowing for the shyest or most nervous of students varying ways to discuss class information through the use of technology

Establishing Ground Rules

When a group agrees publicly on how to carry out its work, the reduction in ambiguity can promote class participation and help to maintain order in the classroom. Ground rules for discussions can be set either by asking students to participate in developing them or by suggesting a list that is open to modification. Some believe that having the class set the rules increases an individual student's commitment to those rules.

Activity:

Earlier in this unit, you put some thought into the types of things that make for a good discussion. Compare your thoughts with the following discussion guidelines (adapted from Schwarz, 1994 by Kramer & Korn, p. 101-102).

1. The discussion always begins with a question that all members understand.
2. Some level of participation is expected of everyone, but members may participate at different rates or levels.
3. Domination of the conversation by one or two people is unacceptable.
4. Let people finish their thought; do not interrupt.
5. Listen. Concentrate on what others are saying rather than formulating your response.
6. Paraphrase and summarize to increase understanding.
7. Ask for and give the basis for opinions and observations.
8. Divergent views are encouraged; everyone may have a piece of the truth.
9. Be specific and use examples wherever possible.
10. Keep the discussion focused on the topic.

Take a moment to create a list that combines your earlier thoughts with those listed below that you find most helpful. What items should be added to this list? Should any items be deleted from this list upon second look?

Other suggestions for ground rules and how to generate them can be found in Brookfield and Preskill (1999, p. 54-55) and Davis (1993, p. 64-65). Notice that following these ground rules will help to prevent many common problems that concern teachers such as the dominant talker and groups going off on tangents.

Instructor and Student Roles

When the class is divided into smaller groups, the instructor is no longer the leader or even the facilitator of a group. The instructor's role becomes that of a supportive observer. Students assume the role of facilitators and, as an observer, the instructor clarifies the discussion questions in the beginning, monitors the process and progress of each group, and, when the groups have finished their work, the instructor manages reporting, summarizes points across groups, and draws out the implications of the exercise during a discussion involving the whole class. These multiple jobs insure that the instructor has plenty to do during small group discussions.

As facilitators, students manage the discussion, including holding the group accountable for following the ground rules. Another student in each group serves as recorder and is responsible for summarizing and reporting to the larger group on the main points brought out in the discussion. Jason often tells students that he has yet to decide which group member is going to present the group's findings to the larger class during group discussions. This keeps all students immersed in the task and helps to prevent social loafing. (See Doyle and Straus (1982, p. 291-292) for a more in-depth discussion of the group discussion facilitator and recorder roles).

Teaching Discussion Skills

Involving students in the management of discussions gives them an opportunity to learn valuable communication and group process skills, but these are skills with which most students have little experience. It is worth devoting class time to the introduction, demonstration, and practice of most or all of these skills:

- Active listening, including paraphrasing and summarizing,
- Keeping on the topic and managing interruptions,
- Accepting divergent views and managing conflict,
- Involving all participants and dealing with dominance,
- Facilitation and enforcing the ground rules.

The following is a process that Jim has used to help students learn how to be effective discussion participants and to prepare a class for frequent discussions during the semester. The purposes of this activity are first, to model management of discussion in the class as a whole, second, to generate items that form the basis for setting discussion ground rules, and third, to show the limits of large group discussions.

The instructor uses newsprint to post the items suggested by students; probably some students will have done this kind of thing before. If the class begins with students seated in rows, someone usually suggests that the discussion would be better if people look at each other. At that point we stop and rearrange the chairs, assuming the group size allows for that and the chairs are not bolted down. During this discussion have an observer (preferably not one of the participants) note how many people speak and roughly for how long. Later contrast the extent of participation in the large group discussion with that when the class is divided into small groups.

When the group (the class as a whole) agrees that these ground rules are acceptable, print them on newsprint so they can be posted and seen by everyone, and make copies for everyone in the class so they can bring them to every class meeting. For the first few discussions it will help to remind the class to take these ground rules seriously.

Telling students about these skills is not as effective as showing how to use the skills. Ask someone with experience in group process to join you in modeling several of the ground rules. For example, your friend can act the role of a dominant student. You can show what it means to be an active listener. Of course, this assumes that you are familiar with and experienced in discussion skills. If not, try to find a colleague who can help you or a workshop that will develop your skills.

This training will take time away from covering course content, at least one full class period, but consider your philosophy and objectives. If you value active learning and want to accomplish the objectives for which discussion is best suited, then it is worth the time. It will be a waste of time if you fall into teacher-centered habits, and use small groups infrequently during the rest of the semester.

Activity: Refine your views on discussion

- Relate this discussion about discussion to your philosophy and course objectives.
- First, review your philosophy and pick out ideas that suggest where you stand on the teacher- and student-centered dimension. Is this where you want to stand?

Write your response.

- Second, look at the objectives you stated for the course you used in our section on planning. Which, if any, of these objectives could be achieved using small group-discussion? How would you do that? Write.
 - Third, what problems do you see for yourself in using class discussion? List these.
-

Other Types of Class Discussions

In today's day and age, there are ways that students can discuss information without having to face pressing concerns about feeling nervous in the direct presence of others. Many college courses today feature online discussion pages that students and teachers can visit at their leisure and post critical thinking questions, solicit student opinions about current events as they relate to class material, post practice quiz questions for the students to discuss and/or discuss confusing aspects of their assigned readings. Perhaps one of the more popular online discussion pages is the *Blackboard Vista* family of discussion pages. Students in the digital age often feel quite comfortable visiting these types of sites for a couple of minutes while they are checking their email.

Other ways to generate discussion regarding class material that teachers have utilized with considerable success include the following:

- Creating email list serves for the class;
- Encouraging students to attend office hours and discuss class material on a one-on-one level with the professor, perhaps rewarding students for doing that;

- Giving students the opportunity to present their written thoughts or questions about class material, whether by email or handwritten note.

For most teachers, these types of discussion modes are viewed as important to developing a sense of community with the students, but these efforts are not viewed as positively as getting involved in class discussions within class. After all, as Jason might say, we are not aware of many jobs out there where employees are cherished for being a wallflower. It's a talking world, ya know!!!

Evaluating Discussions

There are a lot of reasons to use discussions in class and if these reasons are related to some of your objectives, you want to know if those objectives were achieved. You may also think that participation itself should be an objective and want to grade students on the extent to which they participate. These are some reasons not to grade participation:

- Talking is not the same as learning.
- Grading the number of comments reinforces only talking.
- Grading the quality of comments is highly subjective.
- It is difficult for the teacher to manage the discussion while evaluating the students.
- In many cases you are grading personality traits, so shy students are at a disadvantage.

Rewarding, however, means that you encourage and recognize comments that are of high quality, as well as comments that indicate active listening. Small groups or the class as a whole can be rewarded for a good discussion. You can work with shy students to reward their less frequent comments, and perhaps reduce their shyness, whether in

class, during office hours, or on *Blackboard Vista*. One area where grading may be appropriate is that of student preparation for discussion. For example, students might be asked to prepare summaries of sections of a reading assignment. Each student prepares a different section so that the group has all the information needed for the discussion. If one student does not do that the group cannot do its job. You might want to grade that kind of preparation.

Critical Thinking Interruption

- ***There are reasons why one might suggest that grading discussion quality is a bad idea that is not logistically sound. However, what are some reasons why grading class participation might be a good idea or worthy of pursuit?***
-

Evaluating whether the discussion achieved the stated objectives is a different matter. We will work on course evaluation in a later section and many of the techniques that we present there can be applied to the evaluation of discussions, (e.g., student writing and videotaping). Specifically for discussion, Brookfield and Preskill (1999, p. 215-216) provide a checklist of questions to assess the teacher's contribution to discussion management. They (p. 218-220) also suggest using a "discussion audit" to assess "how well students have observed the rules of conduct they have evolved to govern the discussion process." These authors suggest that students do this on a weekly basis and then summarize the audits in a learning portfolio at the end of the semester.

Whole Class Discussions

If a discussion is an activity in which all members of the group have an opportunity to participate, then there are clear limits on the size of the group involved. A General Psychology class with about 100 students in it and 75 minutes per class meeting, gives each student less than a minute to talk. Given the realities of this situation, most students will not participate unless we use techniques other than the frequently used so-called lecture-discussion method. In that method the teacher occasionally asks a question and allows a few students to respond briefly.

As mentioned before, you can do some work with small groups in a large class, and that is easily done when the students work in pairs. The teacher poses the question, asks students to write for a couple of minutes, and then to exchange their papers and discuss their ideas. After allowing a reasonable amount of time for this, the teacher may ask for a few volunteers to summarize one or two main ideas from their paired discussion, using that for continuing the lecture. Even if some students do not comply with this process (those who use passive aggression and sit staring at the floor), almost all students will address the task and participation will be much more inclusive than it is in a typical "lecture-discussion."

Asking good questions is important under any discussion format. In the whole class situation, one of the most common questions is, "are there any questions?" The typical response is a sea of glassy eyes, although many students may have questions. Those students are afraid to look dumb. What can you do?

One solution is to have students write their questions and submit them at the end of class. An alternative to that is to ask students, "what was the muddiest point in today's

class?" or "what things seemed most confusing in class today?" Review their responses, pick out the points mentioned most often, and go over these ideas again in the next class. This suggestion is from the extremely helpful book on classroom assessment by Angelo and Cross (1993).

I suspect that all of us will continue to pose questions to our class gathered as a whole and not ask them to do any writing. In effect, this is like a demonstration; a few students play the role of the inquirer or the commentator, while the silent students observe or ignore the demonstration. We should not delude ourselves into thinking that we are having a class discussion, but rather try to make this an effective demonstration.

In this kind of discussion-demonstration a teacher may again face the problem of the over-involved student in a variety of forms: one who talks a lot but says little, the class clown, and the aggressive confronter. Prevention is the best medicine in the form of ground rules that you clarify for the class at the beginning: First, tell students that their opinions are welcome. Second, emphasize respect for the opinions of others, including that of the teacher. When you still have a problem, remember that this is your class, and it is alright for you courteously to interrupt a student. The rest of the class will appreciate that. Then talk with the student after class or before the next class, saying that you value all constructive contributions and help the student to become more constructive.

Productive questioning is not as easy as one might think. You can be too general (e.g., What do you think of Freud's theory?) or too specific (e.g., What area of development did Kohlberg study?). Asking questions should fulfill some of your objectives and most of your questioning should be planned in advance. You also have to decide on issues concerning the process: Will you call on students, and risk embarrassing

shy students? Will you learn to be patient and bear the silence during which, you hope, students are thinking? Ten seconds can seem endless. Don't forget, let your teaching philosophy guide you here in these important decisions.

To add more fuel to the fire when it comes to questioning options, we leave you with a potentially useful small group technique that can be used in large classes. This technique is called the fish bowl technique. First, present a question for discussion and ask all students to write a response to that question. Then ask for volunteers to have a discussion in front of the whole class. They come to the front of the room and sit in a circle or semi-circle. The instructor facilitates the discussion. After the fish bowl group has responded, ask the remaining students (the audience) for additional comments.

Jim used this in a discussion of gender role socialization. A class of 80 students filled out a check list of statements about being masculine or feminine (e.g., boys don't cry). They reported whether they heard these things as children and if they would tell their children these things. Then they wrote what the best and worst things are about being a man or a woman. Next, two groups of five students responded to questions based on the previous items; one group was all female and the other all male. After each group discussed the questions, the other group responded, usually with extensive criticism of the views of the other biological sex. Finally, the audience added comments. In short, students usually view the fish bowl technique as a fun sort of exercise, and more importantly, it's a technique that promotes their critical thinking and active processing.

Activity: Creating your own unique discussion format

We have covered a considerable amount of material related to discussion methods and their benefits for students. With that said, you are an individual with a unique teaching style. Record your own personalized method for generating discussion in your classes. Of course, using some of the methods reviewed in this chapter may be a good idea, but it's perhaps more important for the exercise to have your own unique stamp. Don't leave this unit until you have a discussion plan that you can implement.

Looking Ahead

It is surprising how many experienced teachers are either unaware of small group activities or are reluctant to use them. See Steve Meyers's article (1997) for a review of many of these activities. Students do get involved and they do learn through discussions. In the next unit, we will work on forms of active learning besides the discussion format.

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Unit 6
Writing to Learn
and Other Forms of Active Learning

Objectives:

1. Know the characteristics of learning activities.
2. Know how and when to use writing to learn activities.
3. Be familiar with a variety of active learning techniques and resources.
4. Know and apply criteria for effective active learning.
5. Integrate learning activities in your course plan.

The idea that people learn by doing has been part of the conventional wisdom surrounding education for thousands of years, with credit for the idea often given to Aristotle or John Dewey. After all, internships, apprenticeships, and a range of other job training programs accentuate the importance of getting in the trenches and learning a craft. Yet, in college classrooms, this wisdom is widely ignored when teachers lecture to passive students.

Active learning is the contemporary label for learning by doing. This unit will provide an overview of various forms of active learning and some opportunities to gain experience with them. In a sense, the phrase, active learning, is redundant; all learning is active. Learning only takes place when there is active processing of information and experience. The simplest definition of active learning is that it takes place when "students do most of the work" (Silberman, 1996, p. ix).

These are some characteristics of active learning (adapted from Mathie, et al., 1993, p. 185):

- The entire class has the opportunity for active participation.
 - Students understand the relevance of the activity to course content or their everyday life.
 - The activity is flexible enough to encourage student-initiated learning.
 - The activity stimulates learning at higher cognitive levels.
 - Feedback to students is planned into the activity, and is given at the time of or soon after the learning experience.
-

Activity

In a course on child development, you have an opportunity to have your students visit a zoo where children can go with a parent to a special enclosure to pet small animals. The purpose of the assignment is to describe how parents interact with children in this situation. Write an assignment that would use the above active learning characteristics.

Articles, books, and workshops abound that provide advice and examples of how to get students to do more of the work in making learning happen. One important way to do that is through the small group discussions that we considered in the last unit. There are many other forms of active learning, both in and outside of the classroom, and done individually or in groups (Meyers, 1997).

However, a teacher should not jump into using any activity just because it looks like fun and might help students learn, and it takes more time to plan and manage these

activities than you might guess. Virginia Mathie and her collaborators (1993) gave some good advice on using active learning experiences.

- Establish rapport. This is going to be new stuff for some students. It's not what they are used to doing in their college classes, so they need to feel comfortable with the instructor. This involves creating a "climate of trust" and that helps students get involved.
- Stepwise progression. Because these activities may be atypical for many students, begin with exercises that are highly structured and directed by the teacher with clear instructions on what students are to do. This is especially important for first- and second-year students, and for activities that involve self-disclosure.
- Set limits. Instructors must be sensitive to issues of privacy and to individual differences among students. "Students should be given guidelines for nonjudgmental evaluation and feedback for particular exercises" (p. 189). Some of our ground rules for class discussion (Unit 5) would apply here.
- Consider content. Active learning can be used to accomplish any objective, including the learning of basic facts, but it "works particularly well with complex material that calls for the development, evaluation, and tempered acceptance of several alternative explanations" (p. 190).

Activity:

- Does your teaching philosophy contain statements that indicate the relevance of active learning?
 - Review the objectives in your course plan. Identify which of these would benefit from the use of some active learning technique.
-

Writing

Having students write something is perhaps the easiest form of active learning to implement. We are not talking here about writing papers of various lengths, but primarily about writing to learn. Barbara Nodine's (1999) article, "Why not make writing assignments?" captures the essential ideas of this approach.

Expressive writing is written for oneself for the purpose of understanding a concept or topic. Thus, written reflection on material allows writers to clarify their own understanding of it (p. 167).

She recommends, for example, stopping a lecture to have students write a response to some question using "free writing, that is, writing non-stop, without lifting their pens from the page and without concern for spelling" or grammar. Most students will be more involved in thinking about the question than would be the case without asking for the writing. "Remember, the point is to get thoughts on paper where they can be reviewed and re-examined" (Nodine, 1999, p. 168). Here are two uses of this writing exercise:

- First, in smaller classes of 30 or fewer, it can serve as a basis for discussion. All students will have expressed an opinion that they can use in the discussion.
- Second, in classes of any size, students can exchange papers with a partner to clarify what they have written, perhaps with guiding questions from the teacher. We did this in the Unit on developing your teaching philosophy.

Activity:

Refer to the class presentation outline you prepared for Unit 4. Indicate the places where you could use a writing to learn activity. Write a plan for what you would do. [Note: We remind users that it usually is helpful to get comments on these activities from peers or others who have agreed to help you.]

Isn't this a lot of extra work? No, because you do not have to collect, read, or grade these papers. In writing to learn, students do the work and thus accomplish the learning, with feedback coming from each other. Nodine argues that grading the papers changes the purpose of the writing and stifles the writing of authentic ideas. However, Jim likes to collect papers sometimes just to see what students are thinking. This encourages them to take the assignment seriously and it also provides an opportunity to summarize the various ideas that students produce. For these purposes, in a large class you could read only a sample of the papers.

Papers. All of us had experiences with the "term paper" when we were college students. Those of us who survived and continued in academic life probably enjoyed writing these papers, and our ability to do them got us into graduate school. Now we call them articles and they get you promoted. Most of our teachers gave us some guidelines for selecting a topic for the paper, maybe some help finding material, and a few weeks later we handed in our 10-20 pages. That still may be the model for out-of-class writing assignments, but here we consider a wider range of papers and methods to accomplish our course objectives.

First, short papers (1-2 pages) can be of great value for some objectives. You may want students to think critically about a specific issue or to summarize a position on an issue. In writing this, the student learns to be clear and concise in expressing a view. These short assignments also work well for peer learning, where students exchange papers and give feedback to each other.

Second, give as much attention to the writing (and thinking) process as you do to the final product - maybe more attention. Barbara Nodine has emphasized the importance of giving students "the opportunity to experience and understand the process of writing . . . through drafts and revision which are ungraded" (1999, p. 169). This means spending time with individual students as their papers develop, an investment in student learning that is limited by the size of your class. If the objectives are important, and if papers are the best way to help students achieve those objectives, then the time is well spent. The time may not be as great as you think because you are not being a composition teacher who corrects grammar and spelling, but a teacher who is helping students learn to think and to communicate their thoughts.

Ideally, you should read a paper's first draft, not grading it because that might discourage the student from taking risks on a draft. Short of that, scanning the draft briefly in a student's presence or arranging a peer review session in class are beneficial activities. Faculty should provide questions that emphasize the peer readers' description of what they read, more than their evaluation for a peer review session (Nodine, 1999, p. 171).

Activity:

Once again, review the objectives for the course you planned in Unit 3. Would an out-of-class paper help to accomplish any of these objectives? If so, think about the value of a 1-2 page short paper versus a longer “term” paper. Write a draft of this assignment. We will refer to this draft in Unit 7 on grading.

It might also be argued that making these writing tasks more relevant to one's daily life is advisable. Term papers are great, but many of our students may not be encouraged to learn for a lifetime by reading and then summarizing what they read. This is too mechanical for most. Rather, concepts are best mastered, and learning for a lifetime is emphasized, when a learner comes to find value in the process of using facts to enrich their existence. For instance, when teaching Life-Span Development courses, Jason routinely requires students to take at least two independent theories and use these theories to explain how an unidentified loved one has evolved into the person they are today. For instance, interview questions might be created based on Vygotsky's sociocultural approach, and this theory serves as frame of reference by which the student is required to

show “active mastery” of the course material. In essence, the question of whether factual theories can be used or not in the real world is answered. An added bonus is that many students describe having a great deal of fun putting their facts to work in this fashion...maybe not fun like a carnival....but rather fun like being better than memorization of facts that inevitably fade.

Some psychology teachers are overly concerned with teaching students to use APA style. That may be important in research courses, but is not necessary to help students develop general writing skills. You should make students aware of the importance of good writing in whatever career they choose, and you may want to make the development of these skills a specific course objective.

Other Varieties of Active Learning Activities

When students are involved in many forms of active learning they are likely to be excited, talking loudly, and laughing; that is, they are having fun. Can this be learning? There is nothing wrong with helping students to have fun, but you should have other objectives as well. All the various activities we describe can be used in the service of one or more cognitive objectives such as the application of principles or the evaluation of ideas.

Promoting critical thinking often is high on the list of course objectives for many teachers. In fact, in psychology many of our textbooks have special features or supplements specifically designed to teach critical thinking. It is obvious that this is something that must be done actively, and not simply read about. As you consider the various activities, think about what objectives you have for the course, and how these activities can help the student reach these goals.

You will find a wealth of resources to use for these activities. Begin with general sources like *Tools for Teaching* (Davis, 2009). The instructor's manuals that come with most textbooks have activities that vary considerably in quality, but are worth examining. Investigate collections of activities. For instance, in psychology, the journal, *Teaching of Psychology (ToP)*, has activities in every issue, and many of these have been accumulated in separate volumes that we list at the end of this Unit. You can access an index to all subjects covered in *ToP*: <http://www.teachpsych.org/otrp/top/topindex.php>.

Teachers certainly cannot use a shortage of activities as an excuse to avoid active learning initiatives. The choices available can be overwhelming. You might begin by asking other teachers what has worked best for them, then select a few activities and develop them carefully. Marianne Miserandino (1999) provided guidelines, which we modified, to increase the effectiveness of activities:

- Provide a background and rationale for the activity related to the goals of the course.
- Specify what students will be doing and your expectations for their participation.
- How will the activity be evaluated and will it be graded?
- Be sensitive to students' privacy and do not ask them to disclose sensitive personal information (Miller, 1998).
- Be aware of and respect individual and cultural differences (e.g., shyness, personal history, gender) in order to avoid embarrassing or humiliating students.

If you are using an activity for the first time with no one else's experience to guide you, run it through a practice session with some friends. Be sure that the materials and equipment work, and that you know how to help students use these things. Anticipate questions and problems. Of course, you cannot anticipate everything, but we have found

that even when an activity does not work, you can help students learn something by asking them to analyze the reasons for the unexpected outcome.

Case studies. These are commonly used in business, law, medicine, and clinical psychology, but can fit in just about any topic in psychology. A case may become a continuing example in your class. Jim used two cases of road rage during the semester and had students, writing individually or in small groups, apply concepts from psychoanalytic theory, physiological psychology, social psychology, and other areas. Dramatic cases present themselves in the news regularly as well as in your own campus setting.

Paper-and-pencil tests. Students love to “analyze” themselves. Most instructors’ manuals have many tests that can be used to help students understand how psychologists measure constructs and what these constructs mean. Not much is learned by simply taking a test and learning one’s score; the learning is in the possessing. After taking a test of Extraversion, students might be asked to list the possible causes of personality traits given in their textbook, and then relate that to their own lives.

Projects. Some out-of-class work involves learning activities in addition to writing about things the student has read (i.e., library research). Projects involve experiences that become the basis for application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of course content. These may be individual or group experiences.

Some projects are quite simple, like having students practice "random acts of kindness," that is help someone without being asked, then write about the reactions. Other projects are more complex, like choosing some behavior to modify and applying the principles of reinforcement. Data collection projects may be done individually or in

groups. Once again, instructor's manuals that come with textbooks and other sources contain many suggestions.

Other projects are grouped under the general heading of “independent studies,” and may allow students to obtain course credit for research they conduct or help a professor conduct. In our minds, these types of experiences represent particularly powerful mediums for promoting active learning. Jason requires students that work with him on his research to meet on a weekly basis to discuss general issues related to his field of study. During these weekly discussions, students bring perspectives and ideas based on what they have been reading and writing about in relation to their own individual projects. They learn quite quickly that they have an idea to add to broad-based issues in our field of study. Original and lively banter is easily maintained and teachers gain fresh perspectives on their topic of choice.

Games. "When somebody says, 'I knew it all along.'" "What is hindsight bias?" This is the Jeopardy television game show format for quizzing students. It, and other games, can become active learning in two ways; first, by asking all students to create items for the game, and second, by involving all students in playing the game in class. Students have fun with this and practice the terms contained in the items. Jason keeps a Jeopardy “Wall of Fame” outside his office where pictures of the victorious are placed each semester. It is a frequent stopping point in the hallway for students, and usually earns a couple chuckles each day.

Another approach is to have students design a game. Original games may not be created often, but adaptations or existing games are just as challenging. A group of Saint Louis University graduate students adapted *Pictionary* for class use, and Jim used it

effectively in his introductory course. (Try drawing a picture of cognitive dissonance.)

There are few limits to teachers' and students' creativity in designing active learning experiences.

Activity

Take the course plan you developed in Unit 3, or the syllabus for a course you already taught. Find at least two places where you could use one of the varieties of active learning. Write a brief draft of how you would integrate these activities in your course.

Conclusion

Aristotle said, “For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.” Our education system seemed to have misplaced that idea for many years, but now it is becoming strongly associated with effective teaching. The truth is that there are many ways to encourage students to learn actively, and we have only scratched the surface here. It is the job of creative teachers to come up with their own active learning approaches that are uniquely based on their personal teaching philosophy.

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**Go to the web page for the Society for the Teaching of Psychology and click on “Resources” for a wealth of ideas, including links to even more.

Unit 7

Assessment and Grading

Objectives

- Know the purposes and kinds of assessment.
- State how you will use assessment in your courses.
- Know the different grading systems available.
- Design a grading system for your course.
- Relate assessment and grading to your teaching philosophy.

How do you know that your students know what you want them to know? Then how do you report that information to others? Teachers administer tests and assignments to answer the first question, and assign grades to answer the second question, but doing either of these things is not as simple as it may appear and both cause teachers a lot of grief. The process of determining viable course objectives, formulating standards for assigning grades, and then coping with the ramifications of assigning said grades represents a pitfall-laden process for teachers.

The importance associated with comprehending the relationship between grading and assessment of learning goals cannot be overestimated. Of course, all learning requires knowledge of results (KoR)¹; students need to know what they have done right so they can do that again, and what was wrong so they can correct it. However, learning does not require that KoR come with a grade. In fact, for some students a bad grade may create an emotional reaction that discourages further learning. For other students, grades serve as powerful reinforcement for learning-related behaviors.

¹ KoR is most effective when it is immediate or as close as possible to the learning activity, in which case we refer to Knowledge of Results Now (KoRN.)

Our work in this Unit will be divided into assessment and grading. The word, assessment, is more inclusive than the word testing. Assessment describes the various activities that help students and teachers track the learning process. Some assessment is *formative*, which means that we use it during the learning process as an indicator of progress. Based on the results, teachers can do something more to help students achieve objectives deemed important by their instructor. In short, these types of assessment strategies help teachers to shape, refine, and/or revise what is taught and learned.

Classroom Assessment

Angelo and Cross (1993) have developed a compendium of classroom assessment techniques (CATs) that mostly serve formative purposes. One of the most popular of these is the "one-minute paper," one version of which asks students to write a paragraph on "the muddiest point" in today's class. If something was confusing to a substantial proportion of the students, the teacher can work on that point in the next class. Another exercise asks students to write a summary of the main points in a lecture at the end of a class. Teachers hope, often erroneously, that student ideas regarding the main points discussed across each class match their own ideas. When assessments yield less than ideal results, teachers possess evidence that might enable them to alter their instructional strategies and then re-measure how students think and feel following the alteration. The following link will give you five examples of CATs:

http://www.cnsm.csulb.edu/depts/scied/sced490/5_assess_technique.pdf

Of course, there are many other options for formative assessment that one might pursue. For example, asking students to write drafts of papers provides an opportunity for formative feedback. In our experience, it is much more rewarding to help students

develop their ideas than to critique and grade the final product. You may actually see learning happen! In contrast, little learning takes place following the presentation of the final grade. From a learning-based perspective, discussing ideas with students in the midst of critical thinking and synthesis is likely to lead to longer lasting and more substantive types of learning. Arguing with students about "points" will only make us batty.

Formative assessment strategies can be crafted with the interests of students in mind and teachers can obtain information about student progress in “cool” ways. For instance, Jason typically sets up a *Jeopardy* program pertaining to material in his courses and creates competitions among students within and between class sections. Surprisingly, with only a prize of two extra credit points and a picture of the winners framed outside of Jason’s office on his “wall of fame,” we have found that students will study for these types of events, look forward to class, and strive to be victorious. Further, it gives the teachers a chance to step back, see how students are doing with the course material overall, and then decide on whether pedagogical changes are required for the course. Plus, it’s a lot of fun! *Summative* assessment refers to the final product, an examination, final lab report, or final paper. There may be feedback other than the score or grade if the exam is discussed in class or if there are comments written on the paper, but the context is much different than it is in formative assessment. With summative assessment, the outcome is decided, whereas with formative assessment the “final” learning outcome is still evolving and potentially changeable.

In many courses, summative assessment is the only kind that is used. We find that fact unfortunate, but this is another example of where one's teaching philosophy

comes into play. Teachers who see themselves as "facilitators of learning" might be more likely to use formative techniques, while those who believe "students should discover how to learn on their own" may not waste class time with extra work.

Activity:

Take the syllabus you designed in Unit 3 or a syllabus you used for a course you have already taught. List the assessments that are summative, such as exams, papers, and any others that are graded. Now list where and how you will use formative assessment. Is this balance consistent with your teaching philosophy?

Assessment varies on an *objective-subjective* dimension that is related to the type of test or assignment. Generally, multiple choice tests and math problems are objective, and essay exams are more subjective. Later we will work on the problem of reducing subjectivity in order to increase the reliability of various assessment methods. For now, we should recognize that the objective-subjective dimension of assessment is not a clear-cut dichotomy. Rather, it is related, in part, to the amount of teacher effort that goes into the design and grading of the test. It takes a lot of time to write multiple choice test items, but very little time to score those tests. The reverse is true for essay tests; writing the questions may not take much time, but it takes a lot more time to grade them, especially if the teacher writes comments. Item writing time can be reduced somewhat if the teacher uses the test banks of multiple-choice or essay items that come with most

textbooks. However, the quality of these items is highly variable; in fact they often are quite poor and require extensive re-writing to be useful.

Remember that our assessment goal is to find out if our students know what we want them to know, and this takes us back to the course objectives. How we state these objectives will be related to our assessment decisions. Consider this example:

Objective: students will be able to describe the structure and function of parts of the nervous system.

Test item A: draw a diagram that shows what happens when a nerve impulse is transmitted from one neuron to another.

Test item B: When a nerve impulse travels from one neuron to another it crosses the (a) axon, (b) dendrite, (c) synapse, (d) myelin.

Test item A asks the student to describe, but item B asks for recognition and at a more specific level. Ease of test preparation and scoring may not be the most important considerations if you are a teacher who wishes to create assessments that are consistent with your course objectives. The question then becomes whether you will change your methods of testing or should you consider altering your course objectives.

Activity:

This activity is particularly valuable for those of you who have never before written your own test items, so you can have the experience of how difficult this is and have some items to critique.

- Pick an objective from your syllabus.
 - Think of a content area from your course.
 - Write two multiple choice items for that content related to the objective, two essay items, and two items of some other kind.
-

In our introductory psychology courses we tell students that a good test is reliable, valid, standardized, and has norms. Most teachers do not know if their tests are good tests in this sense and do not take the time to find out. Each teacher has a finite amount of time to devote to each class, spread across the tasks of planning, delivery, evaluation, and reflection. We make choices about our priorities based on our philosophy of teaching, but the realities of academic life suggest that it is impossible to be perfect in everything.

If precise assessment of students is a high priority for you, then you need to develop your knowledge and skills in the area of educational measurement. If that is not your top priority, you still have the responsibility to provide good enough tests. Fairness is one of the most important characteristics of a good teacher according to students (Buskist, Sikorski, Buckley, & Saville, 2002), so you should take reasonable steps to

make your tests reliable. They should have some face validity, that is they should look like the objectives you want to assess. Further, your tests should have content validity, which means that the test adequately samples the material in the course or unit. You might ask another person who also is teaching the same course to look at your exams to bolster your perceptions of these kinds of validity.

It takes a lot of work to develop a standardized test, not only in writing the questions but in maintaining security so the questions do not get out. You would have to use procedures like those used by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) for the SAT tests, and few of us have the time or resources for that. More importantly, our courses change as we develop new content and methods, so we would need a new test every time we made changes to the course. Yikes!

It follows that we cannot have norms for our tests in the way ETS can, but we can keep records of student performance over the years, which will help us make judgments about the relative difficulty of our assessments each year. A good enough test then, is a test that can be judged as fair by students and other teachers because it possesses signs of reasonable reliability and validity, and performance could be compared to that of students taking similar tests in comparable courses.

A number of quite helpful sources are available to help you with the basics of test development. *Tools for Teaching* (Davis, 2009), chapters 41 and 42, and *Lessons Learned* (Perlman, et al., 1999) chapters 8 and 9 add useful information on test construction, especially for multiple-choice tests. Finally, we recommend two IDEA papers: No. 16, "improving multiple-choice tests," and No. 17, "improving essay tests." These IDEA papers can be found at <http://www.theideacenter.org/node/62>

After you become familiar with traditional forms of assessment, you may want to experiment with methods that are used less frequently, including oral examinations, performance assessment, and portfolio construction. See *Teaching Tips* (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006, pp. 79-85) for an overview of some of these methods.

An important aspect of successful formative assessment is helping students become “test-wise”. Your tests will have greater validity if you can level the playing field by giving less experienced students helpful advice on test-taking strategies for both multiple choice and essay tests. See *Teaching Tips* (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006, p. 107-111) for a good discussion of these strategies/ Part of this preparation could include giving a practice test that students grade themselves in class.

Even with your advice, some students may have serious test anxiety. A classroom climate of respect and openness should help alleviate this distress, but serious cases should be referred to your school’s counseling service.

Grading

One cynical educator referred to a grade as, "an inadequate report of an inaccurate judgment by a biased and variable judge of the extent to which a student has attained an undefined level of mastery of an unknown proportion of an indefinite material" (Dressel, 1983 quoted in Hanna & Cashin, 1988, p. 1). That is unfortunately true in too many cases, but we think we can learn to do a better job with this essential task. Our colleges and universities expect us to take grading seriously, and students and their parents obviously think grades are important. It often appears that our students' view of assessment and grading might be characterized as follows:

Success in life depends on getting into medical school, which depends on my overall GPA, which depends on my grade in this course, which depends on my grade on this exam, and that depends on getting specific items right or wrong. We may wish that students were not so grade-oriented and should try to get students to operate under other motives, but grades remain a central fact of academic life. Not only are high grades rewarded in the academic world (*summa cum laude*), but others use grades to make important decisions about our students' careers.

Any teacher's grading must be consistent with the college grading policies and practices. Some colleges permit pass-fail grading, some use pluses and minuses with the letter grades, and some may make specific demands about grade distributions. Most, however, give considerable latitude to the individual instructor, so your grading process should be consistent with your teaching philosophy. You may not wish to grade on a curve if your philosophy says that you want to help all students achieve their full potential, and that you believe any student is capable of that in your course.

Given a review of the college policies on grading and your unique teaching philosophy, a good teacher should work hard to develop a grading system that is fair and clear, and this applies to the grading of individual examinations and assignments, as well as to determining final course grades. Fairness may mean different things to you and your students. Grading should be unbiased by irrelevant variables, so that all students have the same chance to do well. More attractive students should not have an advantage, nor should students who often disagree with the teacher have a disadvantage. Students may also think of fairness in relation to work load and difficulty. As one student adeptly put it to Jason, "this isn't my only course, you know?"

Does fair mean the same thing as objective? That is, is there so much subjective bias in grading essay exams and papers that it is impossible to be fair? Not if our grading process is clear to us and to our students by a statement in the syllabus that is reviewed before every exam and assignment.. First we need to be clear about how we grade each examination and assignment. For instance, if you feature essay or short answer questions that have multiple parts, it seems fair to inform students about how many points each subsection is worth. That enables them to make a decision regarding whether to pursue this particular essay, if they have the choice to earn points by completing a different essay (e.g., Complete one of the following three essays). Of course, this same level of detail and “fairness” is required when a student's final course grade is determined.

Grading Exams and Assignments

Each examination and assignment should be related to the objectives of the course. More specifically, every exam item and the elements of each assignment should have a clear relationship to the objectives. When we look at approaches to computing final grades, we will see that one common way is to assign some percent of the final grade to each assessment, e.g., exams = 60%, paper = 25%, group project = 15%. This system gives a weight to the different assessment methods, but also gives a weight to the various course objectives. You should be sure that those weights are the ones you intend to assign so that they represent your judgment of the importance of the objectives. Often we wind up doing much more assessment of factual knowledge than of other objectives that we think are more important. If this is not the type of teacher you want to be, grading strategies and specific exam questions may have to be altered.

Students are more concerned with what they will have to do and know: "What do you want?" Will it be on the test?" These are reasonable requests for clarification, not simply whining. From the student perspective it sometimes seems as though we are playing a game of "guess what I'm thinking," so that we can surprise them when giving them their results on exams and papers. But if we want students to achieve our objectives, then we should be clear about our expectations. You might do this in the form of a study guide for examinations, and by showing them the criteria that you will use to grade papers and other assignments.

Grading Papers

Writing assignments are the best way to assess higher-level cognitive objectives. The 1-2 page paper can demonstrate critical thinking on a specific issue, and the longer "term paper" can assess students' ability to integrate material and evaluate content. If these are important objectives in your course it is your responsibility to make your grading as objective as possible. Fairness matters.

Making a global comment ("Nice work.") with a grade is not responsible assessment. Make specific comments on students' ideas as you read the paper, for example: "Your conclusion does not follow from the statements in your last paragraph." "These sources provide good support for your criticism." At the end of the paper write a summary statement of strengths and problems in the paper. Yes, that is a lot of work, so your objectives must be important.

Objectivity will be enhanced if you have criteria (a rubric) to guide your grading. In Appendix 7A we provide an example of a set of criteria for evaluating longer research

papers; one can modify these criteria to suit other kinds of writing assignments. You should give a copy of your criteria to students as part of the assignment.

Activity

Take the writing assignment you developed in Unit 6 and modify it based on what you have learned about grading.

Determining Final Course Grades

Determining course grades may seem like a totally mechanical process, but this process expresses your philosophy of teaching. Walvoord and Anderson (1998) make this clear in their presentation of models for calculating course grades. Each model makes assumptions that reflect your values and tells students what you think is most important.

- Model 1: Weighted letter grades, e.g., 3 unit tests count 45%, term paper 15%, oral report 10%, final exam, 30%. This teacher places three times as much value on the objectives measured by exams compared to written and oral presentations.
- Model 2: Accumulated points, e.g., tests 0-150 points, paper 0-50 points, oral report 0-20 points, final exam 0-120 points, total points available in the course 0-340 points. Then, letter grades are determined by taking a percent of the total, (e.g., A = 90% or 306 points). Here a student can compensate for poor performance in one area by

doing well in another area, so the system allows students to make educated decisions about how they should balance their limited time in studying for the course.

- Model 3: Definitional system. This model is used less frequently. "To get a particular course grade, you must meet or exceed the standards for each category of work" (Walvoord & Anderson, 1998. p. 96). All areas are equally important and students cannot compensate for poor performance.
- Model 4: Mastery grading. This model sets criteria for performance, such as getting 85% correct on all examinations, then allowing students to retake different forms of each exam until they reach the criterion for mastery, or rewriting drafts of a paper until an acceptable version is produced. The assumption is that although students have different learning strengths, they all have the ability to achieve the objectives and should have the opportunity to do so.
- Model 5: Contract grading. This model places even more value on individual differences in students' learning preferences and their responsibility for their own learning. Teachers negotiate learning tasks and methods of assessment. The important thing is to help all students achieve the course objectives, although they may choose to do that in different ways.

See *Tools for Teaching* (Davis, 2009), Chapter 44, for more details on calculating and assigning grades.

Activity:

What statements in your teaching philosophy can provide guidance in determining how you will determine final grades in your courses? Will that depend on which course you

are considering? Consider the assumptions related to the grading approaches that were discussed. Which of these are consistent with your teaching philosophy?

Now use the syllabus that you designed in our section on course planning. Construct a grading system for that course. How will you make this system clear to your students?

Allow for a significant amount of time to complete this activity.

Looking Ahead

If you have worked through all of our Units so far, you will have designed a course and have a good idea of how you will carry out that plan, all of this based on your philosophy of teaching. Our next Unit will help you learn to get information so you can see if your plan was successful.

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Appendix 7A

Term Paper Evaluation

[Modified from a table provided by Barbara Nodine.]

Use a 5-point scale to evaluate the extent to which a student meets each of the criteria, with 1 = low and 5 = high. You may want to give more weight to the primary criteria. However, rather than simply adding numbers to get a final score, you may want to use the criteria to guide your overall, global evaluation.

A. Primary Criteria: The Problem and Its Analysis.

1. Statement of the problem.

- a. Is the problem appropriate for this assignment?
- b. Is the question studied formulated clearly?
- c. Is the relation of the question to the topic clear?

2. Evidence.

- a. Is the type of evidence to be used well defined?
- b. Is the evidence reviewed well, with the relevant aspects of method and results emphasized?

3. Conclusion.

- a. Are the conclusions clearly stated?
- b. Are conclusions supported by the evidence?
- c. Do the conclusions relate to the question asked?

4. Implications.

Are the implications of the conclusions for theory, applications, and future research presented clearly?

B. Secondary Criteria: Presentation.

1. Quality of the writing: sentence structure, transitions from idea to idea, comprehensibility, and readability.
2. Organization: structure of paragraphs, section headings, logical ordering.
3. References: style (APA or other), completeness, use of quotation marks where required.
4. Quality of manuscript: spelling and typographical errors, cleanness of copy, formatting.

C. Overall Evaluation.

The author has:

1. thought about and analyzed the problem clearly and logically,
2. developed a good understanding of the issues involved,
3. formulated a clear question or issue,
4. assembled and critically examined the evidence and observations bearing on the question,
5. been creative in integrating findings and drawing conclusions, and
6. written clearly and effectively.

Unit 8

Evaluating Teaching

Objectives:

- Know what to evaluate in your teaching.
- Know different methods for evaluating teaching.
- Design a formative evaluation to get feedback while your course is in progress.
- Design an end-of-semester evaluation for your course.

Purposes of Evaluation

Evaluation is part of the model we are using to guide readers through this program.

Philosophy > Objectives > Methods > Learning > Evaluation > Reflection.

For our purposes, evaluation is a way for teachers to discover what works well and what they may want to change. It is a way to document successes and failures, so that over time, we can increase the likelihood of the former, and try to prevent the latter. Of course, we will show some of our results to others for the purposes discussed below, but the primary reason to evaluate teaching is for our own professional and personal development as teachers.

Personnel Decisions

Evaluation data often are used to determine annual salary increments, and for promotion and tenure decisions. These personnel decisions are significant for individuals, beyond the associated implications for one's career. Answers to serious questions like "How comfortable will I be financially during trying economic times" or

“Do I have a stable occupation that will help sustain my quality of life for years to come” weigh heavily on the minds of academicians.

Evidence for a Job Search

If you want to get an academic position, where teaching is an important part of your job, you will have to demonstrate what you can do. In Unit 10, we will work on the development of a teaching portfolio, and evaluation data will be an important part of your materials. When you develop your evaluation plan, keep in mind that your prospective employer and potential colleagues will want to get a comprehensive picture of all aspects of your teaching in summary form.

Evidence of Professional Development

For the purposes of professional development as a teacher, we want the evaluation process to be as extensive and unbiased as possible, so we can make well-informed decisions about how well we are teaching and what we might want to improve. If you create a teaching portfolio, it can serve as an archive of your evaluations from year to year. In examining such an archive, your development as a teacher can be tracked through evidence based standards and serve as crystallized guidelines for your development as an effective educator.

What to Evaluate

Teaching is a highly complex human activity, and we should not expect that it would be easy to describe or judge. There is a lot that could be evaluated including your syllabus and materials, communication skills, methods of testing and grading and student learning outcomes (Cashin, 1989, Table 1). Evaluation is much more than the average scores on end-of-semester student rating forms. Rather, it should include multiple

components and offer a detailed picture of who you are as a teacher and how you got there, including your teaching philosophy.

Given all the possibilities, how do you decide what to evaluate? By this time in our program, one answer should leap to mind immediately -- use your philosophy of teaching.

Activity:

Go to your philosophy and find those statements that say what aspects of teaching are most important for you. For example, you might value the diversity of your students or want them to become critical thinkers. Indicate these things as areas for evaluation to be considered when we review evaluation methods.

Goals of the Course

In Unit 3 on planning a course we discussed the important of stating specific course goals. Doing that should give you some clear direction in planning a course evaluation. Some of your goals will concern student performance – what they know and are able to do. Other goals may relate to class dynamics, for example, whether students participate in class discussions. Still other goals may relate to student thinking and evaluation styles – offering opportunities for students to think critically and synthesize information effectively.

Expert opinion

You might rely on expert opinion when deciding what to evaluate. You can find "experts" in many places: articles and books, conference workshops on teaching, university teaching centers, and among your colleagues. They all have opinions about the most important dimensions of teaching, so you have to do some screening before deciding which expert to use. If your school has a teaching center be sure to use their services, and we strongly suggest that you take advantage of opportunities to attend teaching conferences and workshops.

Student Feedback

Students will provide a lot of your evaluation data, but, as the semester progresses, they also can represent a resource to help you decide what to evaluate. You can get this feedback in a variety of systematic ways, but you also can talk with students informally before or after class, and ask them questions like: "How do you think our discussion went last time?" "What do you think could have been improved about class today to help you understand the topic?" If you have established a comfortable climate in your classroom ("rapport"), students will be honest with you.

In accumulating this type of information from students, many may wonder whether the information obtained is biased, or at the very least unstructured. Yet, that should not stop you from recording things like how questions were asked to students, what their thoughts were and how many students offered these types of opinions.

Your own Experience

After a while, you will be able to discern which perspectives may be most helpful to you and to draw your own general conclusions about what is important. For example, Jim uses an article by Murray (1983) who concludes that enthusiasm and rapport are the two most basic dimensions of teaching, so Jim wants to be sure to evaluate himself on those dimensions. Jason wants to be available to students outside of class, and believes strongly that for learning to occur for a lifetime, students have to start the process by thinking and analyzing information outside of class. Therefore, it is important for him to evaluate students' perceptions of his availability.

Activity:

Go to your philosophy and uncover the perspectives that are most important to you. Think about how you might go about evaluating your progress in adhering to these important principles. This exercise should set the stage for best understanding and eventually implementing material covered in subsequent sections of this unit.

Evaluation Methods

In this section we examine a range of evaluation methods each of which could be studied and practiced in greater depth. Our objective here is to make you aware of the variety of methods that are available, the value of using multiple methods, and encourage you to use some of the methods yourself.

Evaluating before the first day of class

Evaluation can happen even before a course begins. A scientist can evaluate a research design in terms of its adequacy as a test of a hypothesis based on a theory. In teaching, your hypothesis is that your methods will result in student learning and, of course, your theory is your teaching philosophy.

Activity Planning for evaluating a course

Review your teaching philosophy as it applies to one particular course, especially if it is a course you are doing for the first time or one that you find most challenging. Does your plan for your course reflect your philosophy? Write a narrative to accompany the syllabus that gives your rationale for the plan based on your philosophy. Aim to link class activities to goals described in your teaching philosophy. Show your syllabus with the narrative to a colleague for a critique.

Evaluating Teaching in Progress

Some of what we do when we evaluate teaching while a course is in progress is the same as the formative assessment we discussed in Unit 7. In that Unit; however, the focus was on finding out what students know; here we are concerned with what we, as teachers, are doing to facilitate that learning.

Classroom assessment techniques (Angelo & Cross, 1993) were presented in Unit 7, but they also apply here. Most of them do not take much time to prepare, administer, and process, and you get immediate feedback on the extent to which you are reaching your students. When you use CATs to evaluate teaching, add a question that specifically

asks about your teaching. For example, one CAT asks, “What was the muddiest point in today’s class?” You might add, “What could the teacher have done to make this clearer?”

Early term evaluation. We suggest doing a general evaluation about one-third of the way through a course to see how things are going. Ask students to write their answers to these questions:

- What is going well in class?
- What things can we improve? Note the use of the word, we, to indicate that improvement is the joint responsibility of teachers and students.

Those two questions are enough, unless there is a particular issue you want to learn about. For example, you may be trying some new technique and want to be sure all students comment on its effectiveness.

When using this early-term evaluation it is important to let students know what you learned and what you will do with the results. There are some student suggestions that you cannot follow (put windows in the room) or will not follow (don't make us learn these terms). Other suggestions are good ones and you should adopt them as soon as you can (speak louder, use more examples). A fourth category of recommendations are ones that require clarification or discussion with the class. For example, teachers might wonder why descriptions of certain concepts did not facilitate learning or application. These discussions are worth pursuing, at least for a couple minutes of class time. If you explain your responses to the evaluation results, students will appreciate your concern and will learn something about the class.

Observation. "You can observe a lot by watching," is one of those humorously profound quotations from Yogi Berra. One of the least helpful evaluations occurs when a

friend visits your class and later says, "that was a really good class. I liked your examples." These general, friendly pats on the back are of little value in the absence of perceptive, constructive criticism.

Observation is likely to be more helpful if it is directed at specific aspects of teaching, rather than general impressions. The loudness of my speech and my use of examples is not only a matter of opinion, but behavior that can be observed.

There are several ways of getting at these specifics, each of which involves the application of some system of observation categories. Appendix 8A presents categories that Jim has used. An extensive overview of peer review of teaching by Barry Perlman and Lee McCann can be found at <http://teachpsych.org/otrp/resources/perlamn98.pdf>.

Videotaping. This form of observation has the advantage of putting your teaching in a form that can be repeated or interrupted for analysis and discussion. It can also be threatening to many teachers. The discomfort felt when facing a video-camera usually goes away as the teacher becomes involved in the class. If that does not happen, it may help to tape two or three classes until the teacher habituates to the presence of the camera. If you intend to include students in the taping, you should ask their permission. Students who do not want to be in the picture, can be seated out of camera range.

The teacher should review the tape alone the first time to get over the emotional reactions that tend to result from viewing one's self in action: "Oh, look at my hair." or "I shouldn't be pulling at my ear so much." Many of these things do not bother anyone else. However, the tape will reveal behaviors to you that an observer would have noted, and you will be able to change things that may have an impact on the class. After viewing the

tape alone, ask an experienced observer to watch it with you. A helpful observer will ask questions to clarify what you did and may call attention to specific details, but not offer suggestions until the end of the tape. In her section on videotaping, in *Tools for Teaching*, Barbara Davis (2009, Chapter 53) provided some good suggestions to guide the review.

Student opinion. If you want to know how things are going in large classes, but do not have time to review a couple hundred responses every week, consider using a random sample of students. You should be able to get a dozen students to give thoughtful, honest comments about the course on a weekly basis. You only need to be concerned about anonymity if there appear to be sensitive issues in the class, for example, tension in the class because of a cheating incident. In most cases, students will be open about issues concerning clarity of presentations, effectiveness of methods, and fairness of assessment. You or an assistant can interview a sample of students asking them to speak for the class, as well as for themselves, which allows students to take on more of a group identity. These students would be doing you a favor, so some extra-credit points may be justified.

Activity:

What information will you want about your teaching while your course is in progress and how will you get that information? Develop a plan for formative evaluation of your teaching. Where possible, indicate in your syllabus when you will get that information.

End-of-Semester Evaluation

Quantitative student ratings are the form of evaluation that is most familiar, used most widely, has the most research, and provokes the most controversy, so we do want to give this approach careful consideration. However, there are other ways to get information about your course at the end of the semester that will be more useful for planning a revision of the course and for improving your teaching techniques. Consider evaluation as a system, not as data from a single method. In this system you use multiple methods during the course and at the end, and are aware of the relationships among these methods.

Student ratings. The numbers we get from these ratings at the end of a semester are not very useful for developing our teaching and improving our courses; what do you do in response to a rating of 3.8? However, these ratings are used at many colleges and universities for administrative decisions about salary and promotion.

The research on student ratings shows that they are reliable and valid when administered properly. See William Cashin's IDEA paper for a 1995 review of this research, *Tools for Teaching* (Davis, 2009, p. 534-537) for a more recent summary of the research, and McKeachie (1997) for a discussion of the controversy on the use of these ratings. Those who question the validity of student ratings of teaching primarily are concerned with biasing factors. However, most of this bias can be prevented by proper administration of the rating forms.

Proper administration means that you use a well-designed form under controlled conditions. Many schools and departments design their own forms, which may or may

not be adequate. There also are widely-used forms available for purchase or that may be copied. For example, the Kansas State University IDEA system (<http://www.idea.ksu.edu/>) provides forms for a variety of kinds of courses with an elaborate administration and interpretation system that allows comparison of the results from individual courses with a national database of similar courses. That is an excellent system, but it is relatively expensive. A locally developed form that has been checked by an expert in measurement will work well for most purposes. Davis (2009, p. 537-540) has guidelines for designing or selecting a questionnaire, and Appendix 8B is the form that Jason uses.

Another form to consider is the Teachers Behavior Checklist, which is based on a study of the behaviors of award-winning teachers (Keeley, et al., 2006). You can access this list at: <http://www.auburn.edu/~buskiwf/checklist.htm>

Controlled administration is not a simple matter of handing these forms out at a time that is convenient for the teacher. In another IDEA paper, Cashin (1990) gave 34 recommendations for managing student ratings of teaching. Some of these are common sense: do not administer the form on the day of the final exam. Some recommendations concern requirements for statistical adequacy: get data from at least ten raters and from at least two-thirds of the class. Other important recommendations are that the instructor should leave the room while students complete the form and that the forms be collected by a neutral party.

Unfortunately, many of the recommendations are not followed by individual instructors or by their departments, and then the results are used to compare courses and teachers and to make important decisions. That is an ethical issue and it is the instructor's

responsibility to be as careful as possible in designing and implementing an evaluation system. The instructor's competence in evaluation can then itself become an aspect of teaching that is reported.

Quantitative student ratings have the benefit of allowing comparisons across courses, and in your own courses from semester to semester. However, numbers do not provide specific suggestions for improvement, So you should provide students with an opportunity for open-ended narrative comments. This could be done on a separate form in which you ask about a variety of aspects of the course, or at the end of the quantitative form, or after each item on that form. We do not favor the second of those alternatives because students tend to feel that the rating task is finished and take a casual approach to the narrative items at the end. The other two suggestions work better. Providing space for a comment after each quantitative item allows students to give examples that can help teachers improve.

One of the problems in administering student evaluations is motivating students to take them seriously. One solution is to create a situation where doing the evaluation is their primary task and for which there is group support. Try to set aside one class period of at least fifty minutes that you indicate on the syllabus is for "course summary and evaluation." On that day in most of his classes Jim followed this schedule:

- Review the major objectives of the course and how we tried to achieve them, giving examples from the course content.
- Say why these objectives and this course are important for their education. The intent is to get students to take a broad view of the course, rather than focus on whatever was the most recent topic.

- Next, give an overview of the evaluation process for this class period, which begins by handing out a form with the items for which students are to write narrative responses. Typically, Jim asks them to write strengths and needed improvements in specific course areas like discussions, exams, and the textbook.
- Then, we have a class discussion about these items. The idea here is that students' comments may stimulate others to agree or disagree, and to consider things they hadn't thought of initially.
- Students then complete the open-ended items, adding ideas from the discussion.
- Leave the room while the quantitative rating form is distributed, completed, and collected by a student from the class. This student will later take the forms to the department office where they are held until final grades are submitted. This maximizes anonymity and seeks to protect students who might be concerned about an effect on their final grade.
- It is important to take one more step. Students are told that the ratings are not the end of class for that day, which prevents them from rushing through the form so they can leave the class early. Allow enough time for all students to complete their ratings carefully, which usually only takes about 5-10 minutes.
- Finally, thank the students for being there and make whatever personal comments fit the situation. You may recognize some unique event (e.g., the year of 9-11), an activity that worked particularly well, or try to be inspirational. All these comments could bias the evaluation, but data collection has been completed.

When there are less than ten students, Jim does not use the quantitative form, but has someone interview the students as a group. The interviewer, who may be a student

assistant or another faculty member, uses open ended questions as a guide and takes notes on student responses. We try to protect anonymity, although a suspicious student probably would not be satisfied with that. The interviewer then types up the notes, which can be filed and submitted for evaluation by others.

Activity

Design an end-of-semester evaluation of your course and your teaching using multiple methods. Outline how you will administer this evaluation.

Reflection

Imagine that you have completed your course, submitted your grades, and now can look at the stack of evaluations that you collected. Although we approach this task with some trepidation, there is the urge to jump right to the over-all rating on the quantitative form to get our “grade.” Resist this temptation.

Before you look at your data, find time to sit quietly and think about your course. What aspects are you pleased about and why? What things are you pretty sure you want to change the next time you teach this course? Are there critical incidents you wish you could repeat and others you will try to prevent happening again? Write your thoughts down without editing them, and then look at your data.

Jim looks at the quantitative data first, yielding to the temptation to see his final scores. He then reads through all the written comments to get a general sense of what

issues the students identified as positive or negative and needing improvement. [I (Jim) note here that in almost 40 years of teaching there always was something that needed to be improved. Either Jim is a very slow learner or teaching is an extremely challenging occupation.] He then puts the comments in categories and totals the number in each category.

Now Jim goes back to his self-evaluation and adds the students' perspective. (See Appendix 8C for one of Jim's self evaluations.) We both place a good deal of credibility in the judgments of students as a group. A few individuals may be picky, or humorous, or vindictive, but most give honest, helpful comments, as well as a lot of positive reinforcement.

The final step is critical in terms of the model we are using in this guide. Take the narrative evaluation you have written that includes the views of you and your students and compare it to your teaching philosophy. Does your evaluation show that you were true to that philosophy? Where are the discrepancies? If there are any, something should change. Either you will change your teaching methods or revise your teaching philosophy or both. And the cycle continues.

Looking Ahead

Most of our previous Units in this guide have focused on the mechanics of teaching (designing a course and choosing methods) and data collection (assessment of students and evaluation of teaching). Unit 9 concerns how we include values in our teaching and maintain ethical standards. All teachers will confront their own ethical dilemmas and will have to manage students' problems, especially in the area of cheating.

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Appendix 8A

Observation Categories for the Evaluation of Teaching

[This is a brief version of a long form that is part of an observation system developed by James Korn.]

Most of these categories use a 5-point scale, and allow for additional written comments and examples. It is possible to observe all items in these categories in any one class, but it may be more helpful to focus on a smaller number.

Speech

- Speed (slow-fast)
- Loudness (soft-loud)
- Expressiveness
- Clarity
- Reads from notes (little- a lot)

Non-verbal Behavior

- Movement (little-excessive)
- Gestures
- Eye contact
- Distracting mannerisms (no/yes)
- Energy/Enthusiasm (little-much)
- Nervous-Relaxed

Explanation

- Use of examples (few-too many)
- Defines terms clearly
- Rephrases difficult ideas
- Effective use of visual aids and demonstrations

Organization

- Teacher is organized well (disagree-agree)
- Provides overview and class, and structure (no/yes)
- Smooth, clear transitions
- Summarizes periodically
- Reviews major points at end of class

Interest

- Teacher shows interest in the topic
- Uses humor appropriately
- Shows practical applications
- Relates material to contemporary events
- Presents ideas and questions that stimulate discussion

Rapport

- Addresses students by name
- Talks with students before and after class
- Shows concern for students
- Respects students' ideas
- Appears friendly, easy to talk to

Participation

- How much student-student interaction is there?
- Encourages questions and comments from students
- Asks questions of individual students
- Divides class into groups that are managed well
- Praises students for good ideas
- Corrects students
- Manages class well (extraneous talking, other disruptions)

Appendix 8B

Sample Instructor Evaluation Form from Jason Sikorski

Were you provided with a course outline or syllabus at the beginning of this course?

Yes No

Was an explanation of course attendance policies given at the beginning of the term?

Yes No Uncertain

Were the title and catalog description of this course consistent with the course content?

Yes No Uncertain

Was a written explanation of grading policies distributed at the beginning of the course?

Yes No

Did your class begin and end at the schedule time?

Always Generally Rarely

Were any classes in this course ever cancelled?

Never Only rarely and with an Explanation Often

The time in this class was worthwhile.

1	2	3	4	5	Don't
Strongly				Strongly	know
Disagree				agree	

[This 5-point scale is used on all remaining items.]

The methods of instruction have helped me understand the material.

Major points in this class were made clear.

The instructor has been available to me for individual consultation.

It was possible for me to make comments, ask questions, or express ideas in class

Class meetings have been intellectually stimulating.

Reading the assigned material has helped me understand this subject.

Exams and out of class assignments have helped me understand this subject.

My work for this class has been graded fairly.

The number of exams and other graded assignments has been sufficient to evaluate my progress.

My experiences in this class make me want to learn more about this subject.

I would rate the quality of instruction in this course as high.

I would rate the overall quality of this course as high.

Appendix 8C

Narrative Self Evaluation PSYA 101 General Psychology Spring 2000

I received among the best quantitative student ratings that I have ever had, but this is not my long sought-after “great course.” The students’ comments and my own experience tell me that I can do better. I don’t like the so-called Spring semester; the weather is often gloomy and students too often seem tired of school, so in that context I was quite pleased with the over-all strong positive evaluations that I received.

What I did well: getting to know my students (N = 22), planning class activities, and developing study guides for tests. I provided opportunities for students to meet with me individually, but less than 50% did so. I tried to help students who were doing poorly, but had two failures. Most of the learning activities worked well, but I probably should reduce the number and do a better job of evaluating them.

What I want to improve: active learning and critical thinking activities in class. I still am oppressed by the habit of wanting to cover material. Students did learn the five views of human nature, but I’m not sure they could apply these views. Most students liked the class and small group discussions, but I can do better in managing them.

I see two possibilities for the next version of this course: (1) just tinker with details, maintain enthusiasm and closeness, and I will do just as well, or (2) take some risks and try new things to promote active learning, critical thinking, and closeness learning.

Unit 9

Values and Ethics

Objectives

1. Become aware of the values you hold, those you teach, and those you practice as a teacher.
2. Develop and clarify ethical principles for your teaching.
3. Know ways to prevent academic dishonesty and incivility.
4. Know ways to encourage integrity and respect.

Those beliefs that we hold most strongly are bound to influence our teaching, so it is important for us to become aware of our core values and how they influence our actions. One value that we all hold is to do the right thing. We are obligated by society to be ethical. In the first part of this unit we examine values and in the second part we develop and clarify ethical principles for our teaching.

Values and ethics are closely related. Respect for others and fairness are values that form the basis of ethical principles. These values also relate to the behavior of students and teachers in and out of the classroom. Behaviors related to issues of civility might include simple courtesies like not talking when others are speaking and more serious offences such as insults and physical assault. Academic issues related to ethics involve dishonesty, cheating in its various forms, and the promotion of integrity. We will address these concerns

Values

Wilbert McKeachie has been giving practical advice on teaching for more than fifty years. In his book, *Teaching Tips* (2002), he has a chapter titled, "Teaching Values: Should we? Can we?" that includes a personal statement of a kind we rarely see in books of advice to teachers:

I'm a strongly religious person, a humanist active in my local American Baptist church. I believe strongly that love and respect for other human beings is not a *relative* value -- simply a current norm taught in our society -- but rather a universal value that should guide the behavior of all human beings at all times. . . . I believe that no one has the ultimate answer to the question human beings have wrestled with since the beginning of human self-consciousness -- What is Good? Each of us must make a commitment to the best we can conceive of, to give our insights to fellow human beings, and to welcome their thoughts in order that we may come closer to ultimate truth (p. 292).

This is a statement of deeply held belief based on religious faith. One does not have to share that faith to understand the value and how it can influence teaching. But should we teach our values to others? McKeachie says, "we can't avoid teaching values" (p. 333), such as honesty and respect, and we should help students become sensitive to issues pertaining to values.

Activity:

Take your teaching philosophy statement and highlight the sentences or phrases that indicate particular values. Will you try to teach these values? If so, will you do this explicitly or indirectly, and what methods will you use? Write your answers to these questions and, if it seems to fit, include this in your philosophy statement.

Think about whether your values are represented in your syllabus, for example, in class activities, assignments, content, and policies? Should your values be explicitly stated to your students or implied by what you do as a teacher or both?

If you have a partner to help you with the activities in our Guide, discuss your answers with that person.

These are questions that you should return to occasionally, perhaps whenever you review your teaching philosophy or do a self-evaluation of a course. Other great teachers have written at length about values. We recommend William James's talks to students that he appended to his *Talks to Teachers* (1899/1958), especially the lectures titled, "on a certain blindness in human beings" and "what makes a life significant." Also see Parker Palmer's (1998), *The Courage to Teach*.

Coming to understand our own values and even the values of others is perhaps the best way to appreciate alternative value systems. Although, respect for persons may be a universal value, individual autonomy is not. As such, it would seem logical that finding a

way to implement your values in your own way may represent the purest way to “be yourself” when teaching. The journey toward being yourself is also your own, as there is no known tutelage available for understanding and articulating who you are from a values perspective.

Diversity

For many teachers, embracing diversity represents a personal value. Having students with different backgrounds and abilities, including disabilities, adds more variety to the class discussion because students bring a greater variety of experiences and viewpoints (Lynn, 1998). Greater diversity among students also may raise ethical dilemmas. For example, to what extent should special testing conditions be available for students with learning disabilities? When your class has a significant proportion of students of color, or when your class is homogenous as far as ethnicity or race, how do you approach discussions of ethnicity and/or race? You may not be aware of gay and lesbian students in class who are offended by student comments. Will you challenge students who make prejudiced statements against any group? How might you challenge them in a way that is respectful, informative, and still consistent with your overarching value system?

Many graduate programs now include full courses, sections of courses, and workshops on diversity issues, although these might not be directly related to teaching. We found two sources to be particularly helpful to supplement diversity-based coursework you may have had. Nancy Chism’s (2002) discussion of “taking student social diversity into account” is chapter 10 in the eleventh edition of McKeachie’s

Teaching Tips. Barbara Davis (2009) covered this topic extremely well in Part II of *Tools for Teaching*. We selected the following points as highlights of their advice:

- Make all students feel welcome by treating them as individuals with their own preferences and goals for the future. Once again, learning students' names is critical, including ethnic names that you will have to learn to pronounce.
- Provide opportunities for full participation, recognizing that in some cultures speaking up is frowned upon. Jason actually grades his students on class participation. While in-class comments and questions contribute to the class participation grade, the shyest of students can still score well by asking questions and posting comments to online discussion blogs.
- Learn about all the various groups represented by your students. Understanding cultural and lifestyle differences and preferences will help you avoid embarrassment to yourself and students.
- Be inclusive in your classroom. Use language that includes everyone (e.g., parenting, not mothering), and provide a range of activities that allow participation by all students.
- In discussion, be open to diverse views, but do not tolerate offensive comments. Here is where you do teach a value--respect for others.
- Do some additional reading if you are uncomfortable imagining how you might deal with insensitive comments.

You should also take a look at the STP website: [Resources > Diversity](#)

Critical Thinking Interruption

Imagine that you have a class of 50 students, including a mix of gender and race, and diverse in ways of which you are unaware. In a discussion of child development a student says, “I think if you let little boys play with dolls they might grow up to be homosexuals.” How will you respond to that?

Ethics

Activity

Write your answers:

- What ethical issues concerned you most when you were an undergraduate student?
 - What ethical issues (will) most concern you as a teacher? These issues may be of concern to you now or may be issues you anticipate in the future.
-

The best data we have on ethical issues in teaching come from a survey conducted some years ago by Tabachnick, Keith-Spiegel, and Pope (1991). They received responses from 482 out of 1,000 people selected from the 1987 APA Membership Directory who answered questions about both their behavior as teachers and whether these behaviors are ethical. It would be nice to have more recent data, but it is interesting to compare these responses with the concerns you may have expressed in our last activity. These are some of the major findings from this survey:

- Some behaviors were articulated frequently by this teacher sample to represent common ethical concerns and challenges: teaching material sometimes not mastered and teaching without adequate preparation. These are issues of competence.
- Some ethical judgments were difficult, meaning that most responses were in the middle on the ethics continuum: Teaching when distressed; encouraging competition among students.
- Controversial issues were those where responses were bi-modal: sexual thoughts about students; giving credit rather than salary for student assistants.
- These are some other issues that come up as common concerns of teachers:
 - Bending the rules for selected students who are more likeable or needy.
 - "Boundary blurrings:" attending student parties; dating students; asking or doing small favors for students.
 - Sexual relations with students or other faculty (freedom of association vs. abuse of power).
- Some issues seem relatively unimportant but are controversial nevertheless: selling unwanted complementary textbooks; and our favorite, "There was no consensus among respondents on the ethics of hugging students" (p. 515).

Another survey of 950 faculty members at a variety of colleges and universities resulted in a list of seven categories of teacher behavior that should not be tolerated (Braxton & Bayer, 1999). An example of each follows the category label:

- Condescending negativism - insulting students.
- Inattentive planning - not having a syllabus.
- Moral turpitude - having sex with a student.

- Uncommunicated course details - not stating exam dates.
- Particularistic grading - bias for or against certain students.
- Personal disregard - teaching under the influence of alcohol.

A survey of 482 students on two campuses showed that their views of ethical behavior are generally similar to the views of faculty (Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, & Allen, 1993). "Students rated professors who give some students unearned advantage and who act in ways that embarrass students to be the most unethical" (p. 149). Overall, students were "less condemnatory than teaching psychologists were toward themselves" (p. 161).

Some disturbing results come from a survey of 261 graduate teaching assistants (Branstetter & Handelsman, 2000), most of whom reported practicing many behaviors that they believed to be unethical, including teaching material they have not mastered, teaching courses outside their specialty, and teaching when too distressed to be effective. Only about 20% thought that their training for teaching was definitely adequate. Less than one-third had any training at all for teaching and "fewer than 6% reported receiving any ethics training before teaching" (p. 46). We wonder whether licensing boards would be comfortable licensing counselors and therapists if they did not receive training and supervision about what they were doing and especially how they treat their clients and view their relationships with their clients (Sikorski & Keeley, 2003

Critical Thinking Interruption

How much training and supervision did you receive in graduate school or beyond that was solely focused on teaching you to teach? If there was little or no training for you, what can you do to improve this situation for yourself?

The closest thing that psychologists have as a formal statement on the ethics of teaching is in Section 7 of the Ethical Principles of Psychologists (<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code2002.html>). The section is written primarily for clinical and other professional psychologists, but it also applies to teachers. For example, it says your syllabus should clearly reflect course content and means of student assessment. Other sections of the code also are relevant, including not practicing (teaching) outside your areas of competence and providing timely and specific feedback on performance. Sexual contact with students is clearly prohibited. We assume that if you are or were in a psychology graduate program, you have studied the APA Ethical Principles.

Selected Ethical Dilemmas

Self Disclosure

How much should you tell students about yourself and what should you ask them to tell you about themselves? For the teacher, some disclosure is humanizing; it lets students know what you are like and that you share problems and joys. Jim has used his children and grandchildren as examples in class. He also talks about applying operant conditioning to controlling his exercise and had students design a behavior modification program for him as a class discussion. Jim tells students that he had two heart operations

and was in psychotherapy. However the appropriateness of this disclosure becomes less clear because he provides fewer details of the psychotherapy than of the heart procedures, and understanding that difference also becomes a topic for class discussion.

We should not ask students to disclose anything that would embarrass them or others. Beyond that, there are things we should not know about students, even if they want to tell us. This is a special concern in psychology classes where teachers may be seen as therapists. Even teachers who do have clinical training should not engage in anything that appears to be therapy because that would confound the two roles. A common form of writing assignments is the journal in which students relate course content to their experiences. If you use this assignment, set clear limits on what students may write.

Critical Thinking Interruption:

What are the limits on what you will disclose about yourself to your students? What limits would you place on what students should disclose to you? How will you inform students about those limits?

Maintaining Boundaries

Is it OK to meet for coffee with a few students from your class? What about having a few beers with them at the local bar after a challenging final exam? The truth of the matter is that these types of issues arise frequently in the life of a professor, perhaps

even more frequently for younger professors who are sometimes fairly close in age to their students.

Many professors actively attempt to relate to their students in a way where students see them as approachable. Being approachable can be very important, as it opens up the possibility of responding to specific student questions in a one-on-one setting. Further, professors want to be approachable so that students learn the value of seeking out answers to questions, as opposed to sitting back passively and absorbing answers from teachers. However, most professors would probably agree that drinking alcohol with students has no real learning value in an academic sense. In fact, drinking alcohol in our society commonly portends a level of friendship and intimacy that is not characteristically expected or valued in a relationship between college professors and their students. Others might also argue that alcohol comes with a range of issues and risks that most professors should be too busy to entertain (e.g., loss of inhibition, safety concerns, etc.).

When it comes to drinking coffee, going bowling, or other types of social events that do not involve alcohol, there are divergent views on how to handle these situations. For instance, some would note that being an advisor to the Psychology Club on campus might require a professor to attend some social functions, at least for a brief period of time, to check on student progress in establishing collegial relationships or raising monies for the club. Other professors might argue that their relationships with graduate students on their research team are more social in nature and sometimes involve eating a meal together or watching a local baseball game. However, beyond these types of situations, it would likely seem to most that spending time socially with students compromises the

nature of the student-professor relationship. For instance, social relationships with students where boundaries are blurred can set the stage for unethical behavior or at least challenges in motivating students to master course material.

Critical Thinking Interruption:

What do your boundaries with students look like? Why have you established boundaries in this way? How might your establishment of these boundaries facilitate student learning?

For an extended discussion of ethical issues in teaching with specific cases, we recommend *The Ethics of Teaching: A Casebook* (Keith-Spiegel, Whitley, Balogh, Perkins, & Wittig, 2002).

Academic Integrity

As teachers we have an obligation to act ethically and to teach certain values, one of which is honesty. Discussions of academic integrity often focus on student cheating and ways to prevent it. This is a real problem that exists at all colleges and universities, and that should not be ignored. In fact, ignoring cheating is one part of the problem.

Critical Thinking Interruption

Why do students cheat? This includes cheating on tests and plagiarism in writing assignments. List three or four major reasons why you think students cheat.

In surveys that included more than 6,000 students from a variety of colleges and universities, Stephen Davis and his colleagues (Davis, Grover, Becker, & McGregor, 1992) found that rates of cheating in college ranged from 9% in a sample of women at a small, private college to 64% of men at a small regional university. These investigators were concerned primarily with cheating on examinations; 80% said they simply copied from another paper or used crib notes. When students responded about why they allow other students access to their answers, the most frequent reason (range of 76% to 88%) was because the other student was a friend. Other reasons included: "He was bigger than me." "I felt sorry for them." "I didn't like the teacher.", and "I knew if I got caught nothing would happen." This last reason seems particularly important. Davis's own research and that of others whom he cites indicate a widespread view that "everyone cheats" and that it is "a normal part of life. . . Academic dishonesty is reinforced, not punished" (p. 17).

So a major reason that students cheat is that teachers seem not to care about it. You may recall teachers who sat in the front of the room reading a book during an exam. There are two general forms of caring about integrity that teachers should use. One is to be actively involved in the administration of examinations and the process of doing writing assignments. The second way of caring is to understand students' problems and establish a classroom climate of trust.

Tools for Teaching (Davis, 2009, Chapter 38) provides much of the help you need for preparing and administering tests that make cheating difficult, including using multiple forms of the test, having students sit in alternate seats and rows, if that is possible in a crowded classroom, and having proctors walking around the room. You

also should talk to your students about cheating, how you are trying to prevent it, and what happens when cheating is detected.

During the first day of class, Jason makes it very clear that all instances of cheating will result in a grade of “F” for that course. Further, each student discovered to have cheated will always be referred to the judicial officer at the university. No exceptions to this rule are ever to be made, even if one cheats on the most minor of assignments. When these course rules are articulated without explanation, students often respond with concern and fear, and rapport might be impacted negatively. However, when these rules are explained in tandem with the values that the teacher possesses (e.g., integrity, fairness), the burn of hearing these seemingly “harsh” rules fades. Of additional note, it is very important to never make exceptions to your rules if you promise never to make exceptions to your rules. Therefore, when tests or quizzes are administered in Jason’s class, he asks each student to bring all of their belongings to the front of the room. He patrols the aisles and runs his student writing assignments through databases designed to detect plagiarism. These precautions take time to complete and are occasionally viewed as a considerable nuisance by students; however, these actions drive the value message home that cheating will not be tolerated. Preventing academic dishonesty is a process, and this process requires that a teacher be consistent and explain to students why they feel that honesty and integrity are so important.

Activity

What will you do if you think a student is cheating? Then what will you do if it is clear that you are right? This is something you should decide before it happens. So write a plan

for how you will move from *thinking* that cheating is going on to concluding that it is going on, and then what action you will take.

Establishing a climate of understanding and trust will help to prevent cheating. That is just as important as knowing how to catch and deal with cheaters. We have adapted the following suggestions from McKeachie and Svinicki (2006, p. 116-117):

- Reduce the pressure. For example, do not put too much weight on any one exam or assignment.
- Make reasonable demands by making assignments of reasonable length and difficulty. It is better to set modest goals and then find ways to challenge students, than to ask too much at first.
- Develop group norms supporting honesty. Involve students in designing a system to promote honesty, like the honor system. Remember that fairness is the ethical principle of most concern to students.
- Preserve students' sense of individuality. Learning their names is the most effective way to do this when class size permits. Of course, then you must use their names when talking with students about why they resorted to cheating.
- Talk about integrity as a value.

Davis and Ludvigson (1995), in a survey of 2,153 undergraduates from 71 colleges and universities, found that cheating ranged from 42% to 64% in their samples, that most cheated more than once, that most had cheated in high school, and that more men than women had cheated. Their data also suggested, "that external deterrents [to

cheating] will fail in the long run" (p. 120). They conclude, "a philosophy of education, if taught with conviction, just may lessen cheating" (p. 121). The seemingly abstract and idealistic issue of teaching values that began this unit turns out to have practical implications.

Plagiarism presents some different problems. Understanding and trust are just as important here, but in addition, students need some specific instruction in the writing process. Do not assume that students, even seniors, know what plagiarism is. In some psychology departments your course may be the first one in which students have had a writing assignment or, if they had one before, where anyone talked with them about plagiarism. You should discuss this at the beginning of the course, when you discuss honesty in all forms, and then again when you make specific writing assignments. Your discussion should include:

- Forms of plagiarism: (a) Handing in an entire paper written by someone else. Show students that you are aware of Internet sources that provide completed papers. (b) Copying entire sections from an article or other source without quotation marks and a citation. (c) Paraphrasing without giving credit by a citation.
- Give examples of the second and third forms, including good and bad paraphrasing.
- Clarify college penalties for cheating, department policy if there is one, and your penalties; put these in writing in your syllabus.

Know what you will do to detect plagiarism and to confront alleged perpetrators. You might add that process to what you wrote for the previous activity. However, there is a delicate balance here between detecting offenders and maintaining the climate of trust you may want to develop. Rebecca Howard (2001) pointed out the importance of

working with students as they develop their idea for a paper, critiquing early drafts (at least one) without grading them, and providing thoughtful comments on the final paper. She recognizes that in large classes this may be difficult, if not impossible. Refer back to our discussion of writing assignments in Unit 6.

Part of your preparation for dealing with academic dishonesty should be to find out the extent to which you will have administrative support when you have to apply penalties for cheating. Know who the people are who *will* (not just who *should*) back you up: department chair, college dean, student honor court, or others. There have been cases where instructors have been left out on a limb, while others sawed it off. Confronting cheating is difficult and time-consuming, but it is the right (i.e., ethical) thing to do.

Activity: Write an academic integrity statement for your syllabus. How and when will you talk with students about these issues? How do these things relate to your philosophy of teaching?

Civility

A few years ago an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* began: "It's every professor's nightmare: losing control of the class. And if anecdotal evidence counts for anything, it's happening more and more" (Schneider, 1998, p. A12). Well, anecdotal evidence should not count for much, but the incidents of abuse described in this article

did happen, and teachers should be prepared to respond, whether to the common problem of students talking during a lecture or the infrequent insults or threats.

Respect for others is the value in question here. Some of the points made in our discussion of integrity apply here. Understand the situation in which students find themselves, including the demands of your course. Model respect for others and discuss it as a value. Treat students as individuals (again, we stress the value of learning their names) and establish some kind of personal relationship.

The large class situation concerns many teachers. Jim's Saint Louis University colleague, Michael Ross, has over 300 students in his General Psychology class. He describes what will happen when students talk during lecture. Jim has visited this class in a large auditorium and was amazed at the level of attention from this mass of students, so this approach seems to work. Ross follows these steps:

1. I stare directly at them while I lecture. Once they make eye contact with me, they get the message.
2. Walk to where they are sitting and lecture directly to them.
3. Stop lecturing and stare at them until they stop talking.
4. Same as step 3 followed by saying that only one of us can talk at a time, and if they prefer that it be them or me. I wait for an audible reply.
5. Same as 4, but as I dismiss the class I walk to where they are seated and ask them to see me after class. I tell them either to stop talking or drop the course.
6. I have never had to do this, but I would request their removal from the class.

Extreme emergencies may occur. For example, two students in an evening class at Jim's school were prepared to fist fight because of a dispute. You should not worry much

about these unlikely events happening to you, but you should know how to reach your campus security personnel.

Of course, civility is a two-way street; teachers also may insult and threaten students. Sometimes, this is simply subtle sarcasm, but at other times the insults are direct: "Most of you aren't smart enough to pass this course, and you won't." Sexism and racism may be overt or covert, and sexual harassment continues to be a problem. Any sign of lack of respect for students by teachers can become an occasion for a reaction by those students, individually or collectively.

The ethical teacher will work hard to behave civilly toward students, and when mistakes do occur, these teachers learn from these errors and work hard to prevent their recurrence. However, here are less obvious forms of incivility to which teachers should be sensitive. Judith Gibbons (2000) described developmental vulnerabilities in college students. A developmental vulnerability is a problem that people face because of their age and stage in life. For example, separation from one's mother is a problem for an infant, but not for most teenagers. Gibbons points out that certain "groups of students might be particularly vulnerable. For example, students whose first language is not English may be worried about oral presentations in class. Ethnic minority students often feel pressure from increased visibility. . . . Students with disabilities continue to suffer from negative stereotypes. . . . Gay and lesbian students are often the 'invisible minority' and may suffer from heterosexist assumptions implicit in some course materials" (p. 87). Civility requires not that we "walk on eggs" and avoid discussing anything that might conceivably offend anyone, but rather acknowledge that these issues exist and that we are sympathetic to those who experience them.

Teachers who respect their students will be respected in return. You can begin to respect students by trying to understand them as individuals and as a group at a particular stage in life with the attendant vulnerabilities. Making it clear to students that you value honesty and fairness will promote integrity and enable you to maintain an ethical classroom. For an excellent and extensive discussion of all the issues in this Unit see Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002).

Critical Thinking Interruption

Develop a sketch of a situation in which several students are disrupting a class, first by talking, then by challenging the teaching in an unreasonable way, then by insults. What should the teacher do? Can this be prevented?

Conclusion

The values that professors hold are impossible to hide. Professors speak and interact with students on a daily basis, and represent important parts of students' lives, whether valued or despised. Therefore, it is important for us to reflect on our own personal values, how these values are communicated to students and how students interpret these values inside and outside of class. Psychologists have long appreciated the value of the environmental context in coming to understand the wholeness of individual behavior. In this spirit, teachers should consider their values, even if these values are not the lessons to be taught according to the syllabus, if they wish to maximize the chances that their students will learn and benefit from the class.

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Unit 10

Developing Your Teaching Portfolio

Objectives

- Understand the purposes of a teaching portfolio.
- Know what you will include in your portfolio and begin to organize your materials.
- Prepare or revise your curriculum vita.
- Know how you will present your teaching materials.
- Plan alternate versions of your portfolio.

In this Unit we will help you present yourself as a thoughtful and unique teacher of psychology through a personal teaching portfolio, and then in Unit 11 we will present strategies and resources that you might use to get a teaching job.

Purposes of a Teaching Portfolio

Constructing a teaching portfolio will take a lot of work. Why would you want to do it?

- *Improving your teaching.* The portfolio will provide a record of your development as a teacher. You can build on what has worked well for you in the classroom and show evidence of your versatility by noting how you changed those things that did not work out as well for you.
- *Survival.* When Jim first began to work with students on constructing and revising teaching portfolios in 1994, he told students that having a well constructed portfolio would make them unique in their job search. Now you need

a teaching portfolio to keep up with others in the job search, and later for salary and promotion decisions.

- *Recognition.* If (we hope, when) you are nominated for a teaching award, your portfolio will provide the necessary documentation. You will not be one of those teachers who declines an award nomination because collecting materials is too much work.

What is it?

A teaching portfolio is an organized collection of material that reflects your ideas about teaching and about your performance as a teacher. These words are important:

- “Organized.” There should be a structure that enables the reader to use the portfolio easily. We will give you suggestions for organization.
- “Performance.” Provide clear evidence of what you do in your teaching from planning through evaluation. We will discuss the kinds of evidence you can use.
- “Your ideas.” Show who you are as a teacher; it is not enough simply to document your performance. A good portfolio will include a well crafted teaching philosophy that tells the reader why you do what you do and shows your commitment to teaching and your students.

In the remainder of this section we provide our suggestions for the structure and contents of your portfolio. However, there are other approaches that you can find on the Internet, using the search term “teaching portfolios.” The best-known approach is that of Peter Seldin (2004) who said that a portfolio should be about 7-9 pages long plus appendices. We prefer to organize the portfolio in sections that may vary in length from one to several pages. Both approaches have merit.

Portfolio Structure

Look over the following structure in preparation for your first activity.

1. Detailed Table of Contents.

The table of contents should be related clearly to the contents of the portfolio. One way to do this is by numbering all pages in the portfolio, as you would in a book. However, this reduces your flexibility in adding new materials to a hard copy because you would have to renumber everything when you teach a new course. Obviously this is not a problem for a word-processed electronic version.

2. Personal information.

- Summary of your background, development as a teacher, and career goals; a complete vita would go in an appendix.
- Description of teaching responsibilities.
- Philosophy of teaching.

3. Separate sections for each of the courses you have taught.

Some of your teaching experiences will have been as a lab instructor, discussion section leader, or independent study supervisor. Treat these types of experiences as if they were separate courses, as they often represent important mentoring and learning experiences for your students. For each course provide:

- Rationale for the course. How does your course design follow from your philosophy?
- Syllabus.
- Assignments (e.g., term paper).

- Descriptions of how you measure student learning. Put examples of student performance in an appendix.
- Course evaluation data, summarized. Use multiple methods. More complete data may be in an appendix.
- Your self evaluation of the course.

4. Teaching development activities.

This section would include anything you have done to help yourself become a better teacher such as pursuing a teaching certificate program, involvement in professional teaching organizations, and attending conferences or workshops on teaching. Provide a description of each activity. Some materials might belong in an appendix.

5. Other relevant information.

This might include descriptions of awards you have won, newspaper articles about your teaching, and abstracts of relevant research articles that you published (with complete articles in an appendix). If you have videotapes of your teaching, describe them and how the reader could obtain them.

Activity:

- First, get a container (e.g., large bag, box, file drawer) and put all of your potential portfolio stuff in it. The point is to find what you already have and get it in one place.
 - Second, get a 3-ring binder with index tabs, and a CD or other disk to store and organize finished items. You will want both a hard copy and a disk.
-

Now we will work on the development of the sections of your portfolio. At the end of this Unit we will give you a checklist that you can use to track your progress.

Personal Information

Summary of your background. This is a brief story of your development as a teacher. What or who got you interested in teaching and academic life and in your discipline? If you already have teaching experience, say a little about that. The purpose is to add life to your portfolio. You might conclude this section with a statement of your teaching career goals. Consider your audience carefully for this story and other items in your portfolio. Readers may be put off, if your language is too informal or your format is unusual (e.g., poetry). See Appendix A at the conclusion of this unit to take a look at a version of Jason's background section of his teaching portfolio. Use it as an example to consult, rather than a guide on communicating your own personal evolution as a teacher of psychology.

Activity: Write a draft summary of your background. Show it to others (peers, mentor) for comments, and then revise.

Curriculum Vitae. The CV is a standard document that every academic person submits when applying for jobs or promotion, but there are right and wrong ways to write it. For advice on this go to: <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/cvsamples/a/cvtemplate.htm>
Here are some suggestions from both of us:

- Do not include marital status, birth date or age.
- If you are applying for a position where teaching will be your primary responsibility, then your teaching experience should be given the most prominent position in your vita, before your research and other professional experience.
- Briefly describe your teaching responsibilities for each position you had. TA responsibilities can range from clerical duties (e.g., paper grading) to having full responsibility for a class.
- Publications should include only items actually published or “in press” in peer-reviewed journals. Use APA style carefully. Have separate sections for articles submitted and in preparation, book reviews, invited comments, and conference posters and presentations. Lumping these things together under the Publications heading is “padding,” which is obvious and looks bad.
- Restrict “honors” to college and graduate school academics. Being an Eagle Scout or Most Popular Delta Gamma will not be impressive.
- You may either list your references (no more than four) or say they are “available on request.” Of course you will have asked those individuals for their permission, and at least one person should have direct knowledge of your teaching.

Activity: Write or revise your vita. Ask someone with experience in hiring faculty to review it.

Teaching Responsibilities. This is an expansion of the teaching experience section of your CV. Describe each of your teaching experiences. For graduate students, that would include assistantships, laboratories, independent studies, club or group supervision (e.g., Psychology Club Faculty Advisor, Psi Chi Faculty Advisor) and discussion sections. The purpose is to tell the reader what you did on your own, as opposed to what you were told to do.

Activity: Write a description of your teaching responsibilities.

Philosophy of Teaching. This is the keystone of your portfolio. We assume that you have completed Unit 2 in which you wrote the first draft of your philosophy.

Activity: Review the most recent version of your teaching philosophy. We strongly encourage you to take at least an hour to review this statement, reflect on it, and then revise it. Be sure that it is perfect in spelling and grammar. People who want to hire you will carefully consider both the content and style of this statement.

Teaching Experience

Have separate portfolio sections for each of your courses. Emphasize those courses where you have had full control. However, some of your teaching experiences will have been as a lab instructor, discussion leader, independent study supervisor or the

like. At this time in your career, present these experiences as courses. You might also include your design for a course that you have not yet taught, but that you expect to teach.

Recall our definition of a teaching portfolio: an organized collection of material that reflects your ideas about teaching and your performance as a teacher. For each course you will have materials (performance) and your thoughts about those materials.

Activity: Select one course to use as a beginning for this section. Collect all your materials from that course. Each course should have at least the items noted below. Prepare all the items noted below for your selected course.

Syllabus. This document shows how you plan your teaching. Apply what you learned in Unit 3.

Rationale for the course. Explain how your course design (syllabus) is related to your teaching philosophy. This is an important link that is missing from many portfolios. Show that your philosophy is more than deep thoughts, but something that you actually use to guide your teaching. For example, if your philosophy stresses critical thinking, your course objectives and assignments should reflect that. Your attendance policy may show that you value responsibility or freedom to choose. Your rationale should make these connections clear to the reader of your portfolio. That reader will then have a greater appreciation for your philosophy statement.

Assignments. Include copies of your assignments for papers and projects.

Explain how these are related to your course objectives.

Measures of student learning. Describe your assessment methods, but do not include entire examinations unless you have designed something innovative. Explain why you use these methods.

Other materials. Copies or descriptions of demonstrations, exercises and handouts should be included here. Differentiate those you created from those you borrowed. Again, briefly explain why you use these things, and remember this is an *organized* collection of materials.

Evaluation Data

Here you document your teaching effectiveness. Your evidence will be more convincing if you use multiple methods of evaluation. If you have not done that in the course you are working with now, do so in the future. See Unit 8 for details on these evaluation methods.

Student ratings. You may have used a departmental form on which students circle numbers on a 5- or 7-point scale. If you do not have a department form, do not try to design your own, but find a good one from another department or on the Internet. In Unit 8 (Appendix 8B) we provided a sample of and a reference to the Teacher Behavior Checklist (Keeley, et al., 2006). Present the average (mean) for each item and standard deviation (if available), and include the number of students responding out of the number enrolled in your course. Please see Appendix 10B for a summary of quantitative ratings that Jason obtained from students in one of his courses.

Quantitative ratings are useful as an easy summary of student opinion and comparison to previous performance, but they provide minimal information about how to improve your teaching. You also should have qualitative comments from students. Write a summary of the student comments to include in this section of the portfolio. Present criticism as well as praise, and give the reader a fair idea of the dominant opinion. If the number of students is not too large, put all comments in an appendix to your portfolio. Appendix 10C is a sample summary of qualitative student comments from one of Jason's courses. Remember, include all student comments provided, even if they are deemed by you to be unfair or even ludicrous.

Observations. Include a written summary of observers' comments. Ask individuals who observe your class to write a letter to include in your portfolio. If your class was videotaped, include a summary of the review. You may want to provide a recorded example of your teaching at its best.

Examples of student performance. Student learning is the gold standard for measuring your effectiveness as a teacher, but it is difficult to demonstrate that learning in a portfolio. You might be able to do one or more of these things:

- Compare exam scores in your section with scores from another section of a course or after you implemented a change in your course.
- Present an example of a typical student's project or paper on which you have written comments. This shows how you use feedback to facilitate learning.
- Ask students to write self-evaluations of their learning.
- If you lead an independent study that leads to a student presentation or publication, include these materials.

If you include any of these components, they probably should go in an appendix.

Self-evaluation. Give your ideas about what went well in this course and what you want to change. Comment on the evaluation data provided and how you might choose to respond. If you taught this course more than once, discuss how your teaching has developed. Tie this back into your teaching philosophy statement.

Activity: Collect all your evaluation data and organize it. Write your self-evaluation.

Repeat all the things in this section for your other courses.

Teaching Development Activities

This section includes anything you have done to help yourself develop as a teacher, including completing this program. For each item describe the activity, present materials (or examples), and state what you learned and how you used that learning.

Examples of items to include:

- A teaching center certificate program, including a list of the seminars you attended and a description of any work you did.
 - Conferences or workshops on teaching that you attended.
 - Involvement in professional teaching organizations.
-

Activity: Add these items to your portfolio.

Other Relevant Information

This section is for whatever does not fit anywhere else: descriptions of teaching awards you won, letters from students (with permission) about your teaching, abstracts of research on teaching, etc.

Activity: Add any other information.

Your Completed Portfolio

Congratulations! You have completed the contents of your teaching portfolio. Assemble all your materials in your 3-ring binder. Label the tab dividers to correspond to major sections in your table of contents. Add a title page: "Teaching Portfolio of John Q." Your portfolio should look good; professional but not glitzy.

You should also have an electronic version. You can put your entire portfolio on a CD that you can copy and send to others if requested. You may even have your own web site. The idea is to make your information accessible and easy to revise.

Alternate Versions

At the beginning of the unit, we stated three primary purposes of a teaching portfolio: improvement, survival, and recognition. Having versions of your portfolio of different lengths will help you better meet these purposes.

The complete version includes all your materials for all courses and other experiences, with your commentary, over time. You should have this version in your three-ring binder and most of it on your computer and backup device. Improvement is the primary purpose served by this long version.

A portable version includes basic information (e.g., philosophy, vita) and a sample of materials. Have it on a disk as well and contained within a thinner binder, so you can take it on job interviews or send it to a review committee. The purpose of this “thin version” is to efficiently inform readers.

Finally, a brief 2-3 page summary of your philosophy and the contents of your portfolio, is convenient for sending to places where you want to attract interest in your teaching. In the next unit, we will discuss the “hook, line, and sinker” approach to landing a job. This brief version is part of the hook.

Final Advice on Constructing a Teaching Portfolio

The following tips come from two sources: Maria Lynn and Barbara Linneweh-Heine (1994), who were graduate students who constructed portfolios, and Peter Seldin (1997), who is one of the leading experts on this topic.

1. Don't procrastinate; just do it.
2. Appearance matters; make it look good. You need both substance and style.
3. Make it user friendly with a detailed table of contents and tabs in your hard copy or links in an electronic version.
4. Proof read carefully. Many readers will be put off by careless use of language.
5. Get feedback from experienced faculty.

6. Stay current with your portfolio. Keep it up to date and do not let your ideas become stale.

Now use the following Checklist to chart your progress in completing your teaching portfolio.

Checklist of Progress

- ___ Get a 3-ring binder with tabs for your hard copy. You want this thing to look good.
- ___ Get a disk, CD, or DVD for your electronic version.
- ___ Create a detailed table of contents.

You probably will complete this after you have organized your other sections. Make the table of contents user friendly. Readers should easily find what they are looking for in the tabbed sections.

Personal information.

- ___ Summarize your background, development as a teacher, and career goals.
- ___ Prepare a curriculum vitae. For help see <http://web.mit.edu/career/www/guide/cv.pdf>
- ___ Describe your teaching responsibilities.
- ___ Write or revise your philosophy of teaching.

Courses

Have separate sections for each of the courses you have taught or are teaching. For graduate students, some of your teaching experiences will have been as a lab instructor, discussion section leader, or the like. At this time in your career, treat some of these experiences as if they were courses. For each course provide:

- ___ Rationale for the course. How does your course design follow from your philosophy?
- ___ Syllabus.

___ Assignments (e.g., term paper).

___ Descriptions of how you measure student learning. Put examples of student performance in an appendix.

___ Other course materials.

___ Course evaluation data, summarized. Use multiple methods. Include more complete data in an appendix. Say if a videotape is available.

___ Your self evaluation of the course. Say what went well and what things you want to change. If you taught the course more than once, show how your teaching developed.

Teaching development activities.

This section would include anything you have done to help yourself become a better teacher.

___ List conferences you attended or workshops on teaching. Provide a description of the activity and say what you learned. Some materials might belong in an appendix.

___ List your involvement in professional teaching organizations.

Other relevant information.

This section might include descriptions of awards you have won, newspaper articles about your teaching, and abstracts of relevant research articles that you published (with complete article in appendix).

Print this checklist and put it in the front of your binder.

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Appendix 10A

Sample background section of teaching portfolio

History. For my first class as a teacher of record, I was merely handed a sample syllabus, given the textbook, and offered the best of luck for an excellent semester. There was no instruction or accountability for my work in the classroom. Teaching was seen as an afterthought to my clinical work and research, and the only part of my graduate training that was seemingly undeserving of instruction or supervision. Through extensive reading and teaching experience at a number of institutions of higher learning, my philosophy of teaching has evolved. With this evolution has come a greater appreciation for my role as an educator in this society.

Immediately upon arriving at Auburn University, I consciously strived to be accountable for my work in the classroom. I had the pleasure of having discussions with colleagues pertaining to developing critical thinking in students, refining my presentation skills, and handling difficulties that commonly arise when teaching. I developed a research program pertaining to the teaching of psychology in which I sought to better understand the relationship between student textbook use, pedagogical aids, and learning. It was not long before I was presenting at a couple of regional conferences. I even published a journal article pertaining to teaching in a well respected journal. In time, I became an active member of the American Psychological Association's Division 2, The Society for the Teaching of Psychology. In getting to know members of this organization, I got to rub shoulders with some really good teachers, get tons of tips on issues that continue to challenge me in the classroom and even made some friends along the way. In short, my journey as a teacher of psychology has been a truly fulfilling professional and personal experience.

Appendix 10B

Sample Quantitative Summary of Student Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness

[Note: Results often are presented as means, which obscures the shape of the distribution. Having the number of responses out of the total N and percentages is more descriptive.]

Jason F. Sikorski, Ph. D.
Quantitative Feedback Summary
Two sections of XXXXXXXXXXXX
Spring XXXX

Were you provided with a course outline or syllabus at the beginning of this course?

Yes = 33/33 100%

Was an explanation of course attendance policies given at the beginning of the term?

Yes = 32/33 96.97%

Uncertain = 1/33 3.03%

Were the title and catalog description of this course consistent with the course content?

Yes = 31/33 93.94%

Uncertain = 2/33 6.06%

Was a written explanation of grading policies distributed at the beginning of the course?

Yes = 33/33 100%

Did your class begin and end at the schedule time?

Always = 27/33 81.82%

Generally = 6/33 18.18%

Were any classes in this course ever cancelled?

Never 13/33 39.39%

Only rarely and 20/33 60.61%

With an Explanation

The time in this class was worthwhile

Strongly Agree = 27/33 81.82%

Agree = 6/33 18.18%

The methods of instruction have helped me understand the material

Strongly Agree = 29/33 87.88%

Agree = 4/33 12.12%

Major points in this class were made clear

Strongly Agree =	29/33	87.88%
Agree =	4/33	12.12%

The instructor has been available to me for individual consultation

Strongly Agree =	31/33	93.94%
Agree =	2/33	6.06%

It was possible for me to make comments, ask questions, or express ideas in class

Strongly Agree =	31/33	93.94%
Agree =	2/33	6.06%

Class meetings have been intellectually stimulating

Strongly Agree =	28/33	84.85%
Agree =	2/33	6.06%
Disagree =	3/33	6.06%

Reading the assigned material has helped me understand this subject

Strongly Agree =	23/33	69.70%
Agree =	7/33	21.21%
Disagree =	3/33	9.09%

Exams and out of class assignments have helped me understand this subject

Strongly Agree =	26/33	78.79%
Agree =	5/33	15.15%
Don't Know =	2/33	6.06%

** 93.94% agree or strongly agree that exams and out of class assignments have helped them understand the subject

My work for this class has been graded fairly

Strongly Agree =	26/33	78.79%
Agree =	6/33	18.18%
Disagree =	1/33	3.03%

The number of exams and other graded assignments have been sufficient to evaluate my progress

Strongly Agree =	25/33	75.76%
Agree =	7/33	21.21%
Disagree =	1/33	3.03%

My experiences in this class make me want to learn more about this subject

Strongly Agree =	24/33	72.73%
Agree =	4/33	12.12%
Disagree =	2/33	6.06%
Strongly Disagree =	2/33	6.06%
Don't Know =	1/33	3.03%

I would rate the quality of instruction in this course is high.

Strongly Agree =	30/33	90.91%
Agree =	1/33	3.03%
Disagree =	2/33	6.06%

I would rate the overall quality of this course as high

Strongly Agree =	26/33	78.79%
Agree =	5/33	15.15%
Disagree =	2/33	6.06%

Appendix 10C

Summary of Qualitative Student Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness

Jason F. Sikorski, Ph. D.
Two sections of XXXXXXXX
Fall XXXXXXXX

In relatively small classes all comments could be listed, as in the following sample.

The strengths of this course are.....

- Excellent professor!, really cares about his students and extremely passionate about what he teaches.
- He explains everything in class very well. He is always available for office hours and questions. Makes class interesting.
- Instructor, instruction quality. Office hours worked out for me. Coursework wasn't that much of an issue for me, but I do have skills, so I may not be a good judge.
- An amazing teacher that is willing to walk through every step of the course to ensure that you understand everything! (especially SPSS)
- Very intense. A lot of good information. Sikorski makes course fun! Offers a lot of office hours.
- I found the professor to be the greatest strength of the class. The way he taught the class made learning fun and interesting. He was extremely fair with grading and gave a lot of his own time for extra help.
- Great detailed explanation of course material. Was fair in course grading.
- Dr. Sikorski is always available and willing to answer questions. He seems like he is very interested in the students and helping them learn.
- Very informative lectures, ample help, plenty of office hours, plenty of guidance, plenty of extra credit.
- Instruction quality and style of teaching. Help available to students.
- His enthusiasm for the subject matter. Made coming to class enjoyable. Was probably the best professor I have ever had. You can tell he is passionate. He is very clear about what he wants. The first professor I've ever attended office hours for.
- The strength of this course was that the professor is very knowledgeable, energetic, and made his office hour available even for working adults.

Some things you could do to make it a better course are

- Change book, reading material really boring
- Class is too demanding and very stressful. Make less homework sometimes
- Re-tool due dates at the end. Stress how the research literature more, a lot of people don't know how to find relevant stuff or eureka at the end.

- I think the teaching methodology of this course was excellent. Dr. Sikorski did a good job of challenging you enough that you are learning but helping you enough and making himself available in a way that you stay motivated instead of giving up.
- Less work, very stressful.
- Nothing, I really enjoyed the class
- Great detailed explanation of course material. Was fair in course grading.
- Not move so quickly with material. Spend more time on APA paper preparation.
- Not have the course split in half in two semesters. It's a pain in the ass to realize that a whole semester's work was worth shit and you have to do it all over.
- Lighten the coursework! It's hard taking classes full time, working and doing whatever else needs to be done, and it's really stressful, either that or have more forgiving deadlines, or just take off x amount of points for late stuff instead of letting it build up till the work isn't worth doing because you get no credit for it.
- Puts a lot of pressure so at times it can be overwhelming; however, the nature of the course is very difficult.
- Limit some of the course load, some students are taking 5 courses, and the amount of work can be overwhelming.
- Push the final paper closer to Finals Week.
- Not a lot of outside work. This class was supposed to be a night class and I had to call out of work to do work for this class on campus.

Some other comments I have are.....

- This was the most dreaded class ever but Dr. Sikorski was the best professor ever!!!
- Most challenging and stressful class I've ever taken, I hate research but Sikorski is the best professor at Central.
- Best course/professor
- Dr. Sikorski is very enthusiastic about teaching and made this very tough course oddly interesting and exciting at times.
- I have a lot of respect for you Dr. Sikorski. This isn't an easy class to teach. You devote so much time to your students and I know that I really appreciate all the time you spent with me for extra help.
- Very helpful, very intense course. Helpful in my future. Overall, not that bad.
- I've never taken another teacher at CCSU that has been as concerned with how you are doing. He sincerely cares about his students. Thanks Dr. J! (tear, tear)
- Great teacher!
- Even though the course was challenging, I did not feel prepared from PSY221. I felt like everything was all new to me and I was taught wrong on APA style in PSY221.
- Dr. Sikorski entirely changed my views toward statistical courses and even boosted my confidence level. I feel more comfortable in this area of psychology... used humor well and appropriately.
- I would comment that Dr. Sikorski is an asset to this university. He will begin the process of this college being taken more seriously.
- Dr. J is a cool dude.

In large classes it is better to categorize responses, with a few examples, as in the following from a fictitious course:

Summary of Qualitative Comments
(N responding = 97)

The strengths of this course are:

Instructor's enthusiasm (58)

“Dr. X seemed excited about even boring material.”

The teacher's energy got me excited too.”

Student activities were enjoyable (33)

“I really liked the role play on parenting.”

“I learned a lot from the group work we did.”

Reviews before tests were helpful (19)

“I would not have done as well if we did not have reviews.”

“The reviews showed Dr. X really cared about our learning.”

How could the course be improved?

Reduce the amount of work (31)

“Six short papers are too many.”

“We were expected to read too much in a short time.”

Use of small groups (15)

“I want to learn from faculty, not dumb students.”

“Groups were dominated by a few talkers.”

Other comments:

Positive (29)

“I decided to major in psych because of this course.”

“The video clips were entertaining.”

Negative (11)

“The seats are uncomfortable.”

“I still don't think psychology is a science.”

Unit 11

Landing a Teaching Job

Objectives

- State your immediate teaching career goal.
- Know what you should do to prepare for a job search.
- Know how to write a cover letter and present other materials for an initial contact.
- Develop a plan for making a visit to a prospective employer and for follow up.

If you have completed the first ten units in this program, you must be serious about a career in teaching. A career in teaching could mean either full- or part-time teaching, and there are various ways that teaching becomes part of one's professional life, including:

- teaching at a small college where teaching is the primary mission,
- teaching courses at a research-oriented University,
- part-time teaching in addition to a professional practice, or
- providing training and continuing education workshops for other professionals.

All these kinds of teaching require the skills and knowledge we hope you acquired through this program. Then your task becomes that will allow you to compete successfully for a teaching position. knowing where you want to go in teaching, finding a way to get there, and presenting yourself in a way

Activity:

- What is your teaching career goal?
 - If you now are in graduate school, think about the position you want after you complete your degree. What kind of teaching position will you be seeking and why that kind? Write this goal and keep it in mind as you work through this Unit.
-

Getting Started

We prepared this Unit with graduate students as our primary audience. However, faculty and other professionals needing advice in the job market should also be able to use most of our material. We can help you with planning your search and organizing materials, but acquiring the experiences that will attract employers is up to you. Ideally, you will have had a series of teaching experiences with increasing responsibility for your own course. The best experience would be to have taught a course that all colleges need, such as the introductory course or research methods, and a core course in your specialty area. If you did not have the opportunity to teach those courses, you might at least have a plan for them, perhaps aided by your completion of our Units.

Knowing a good bit about academic life and important issues in higher education also will serve you well. Academic life includes things like serving on committees and doing academic advising. Some departments use “collegiality” as a criterion; that is, will you get along well with your colleagues and do your share of service? Our colleagues call

these sorts of behaviors associated with being an academician, “being a good departmental citizen.”

In addition, knowing something about general issues in higher education will help you impress professors and academic Deans in your interview. For example, knowing the importance of emphasizing cultural diversity initiatives in each class you teach or being able to speak about the challenges associated with facilitating critical thinking and active learning in students may serve you well. In our minds, this knowledge shows an appreciation for the interrelatedness of societal, institutional, and personal factors in teaching college students today. You can learn about these issues in the weekly newspaper, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

In the following sections we will be using the fishing metaphor, “hook, line, and sinker,” that we borrowed from Jane Halonen (1994). The hook, with bait, is what you need to attract interest; the line is what you play out when you get the opportunity; and when the sinker goes down you can land your job. (Actually, the bobber goes down, but Jane does not do much fishing.)

There is a lot you can do to prepare yourself for the job search.

- Talk with those who have been successful in their searches and get a different perspective from those who have not been successful.
- Attend professional meetings where you can talk with faculty who do the hiring.
- Read the job ads in the *APA Monitor* and *APS Observer*.

The first step in your fishing trip is to get your equipment ready. You will need your vita, brief and portable versions of your teaching portfolio, statements of your teaching and research interests, and a cover letter.

In Unit 10 we worked on the development of your teaching portfolio. It is not unusual for a department interested in your teaching to request your philosophy statement as part of the application. This is not the same as stating your teaching interests, which refers to the courses you are prepared to teach.

Your cover letter can simply be a brief statement of your interest in the job, including why you think you are a good match for this position. You also list the other items you are enclosing, including your vita. In Unit 10 we presented some advice on how to write a vita.

Networking

Networking is a buzzword from the 1990s. In its best sense it means that you can learn things from other people and get their help to achieve your goals. It can also mean using other people to gain an advantage through ingratiation or exchanging favors. In that sense you may be pushing ethical boundaries. During much of the last century academics talked about an “old boy network” that literally was made up of men in important positions who gave preference to students, almost always male, or their friends. Some remnants of this system may remain, but mostly this bias has been eliminated.

Learning from others, working with them in the job search, and making personal connections are certainly part of an effective and ethical search strategy. We strongly recommend joining the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP) and the APA, APS, and other graduate student organizations. Be active in these organizations by attending regional meetings (e.g., Eastern Psychological Association) and teaching conferences where you interact with experienced teachers who will share their wisdom, and may want to hire you some day. Networking is not a short-term activity that you do

in the year you go on the market. You should begin to develop your networks early in your graduate career and continue the process beyond the job search.

The Hook and Bait

Fishing experts know that different kinds of fish prefer certain types of bait, so you must know what you are fishing for. You are seeking a good match between your teaching goals and interests, and an available position.

Activity: Use the APA and APS job listings to find positions for which you might apply. Do not select all possible positions, but consider size and type of school, and location. These listings sometimes include part-time positions. If you are interested in a particular school, also check that school's website, as sometimes jobs are advertised in sources other than the *Observer* or *Monitor*.

Cover Letter

Your goal at this stage is to make yourself stand out in a positive way from other applicants. The first thing a reader will see when your file is opened is your cover letter, so it is important this be well crafted. The advice that follows is taken from Halonen (1994), Brems, Lampman, and Johnson (1995), and our own experiences.

1. *Do your homework.* Find the web site for each school to which you will apply and study it to get a sense for what the institution and the department are like. There will be a list of faculty with their interests. How would you fit in with them? Look at the course offerings to see how you might contribute. Mission and goals

statements for the university and the department can tell you something about the values and priorities of your potential employer. There often are clear differences, for example, between a small liberal arts college, a regional state university, and a university sponsored by a religious denomination.

2. *Decide if you are a good match with the institution and its needs.* How will your interests complement those of the university? Are you prepared to teach the courses listed as needs in the job advertisement? Are there unique contributions that you can make? Do not apply if you have serious concerns about whether you will fit in at this place.
3. *Draft your cover letter.* Having done your homework and decided that you are a good match, you will be able to respond quite specifically to the job ad. Consider this outline for your letter:
 - Introduce yourself. The details are in your vita.
 - State why you are applying for this position, showing that you have done your homework.
 - State your teaching interests and why you are qualified to teach the courses they need. Say how else you can contribute to their program.
 - State your research interests. Even if research is not expected, as it might not be in a community college, you can still indicate that you are an active scholar and how this contributes to your teaching.
 - If you expect to continue clinical, organizational, or other professional practice, state what you hope to do and how that will complement your teaching.

- Add other relevant academic information. Do not include personal information including marital status, family, hobbies, or personal preferences.
- Do not simply copy your letter for each job for which you apply. Except for your personal introduction, each letter should be crafted to the potential employer's institution.

Proofread your letter carefully before mailing. Better yet, have someone else do it as well. Sample cover letters can be obtained by visiting the website for the University of Washington Career Center:

http://careers.washington.edu/iframe/all/files/docs/gradstudents/pdfs/AcademicCareers-Cover_Letters_07-08.pdf).

Vita

The advertisement for the job will tell you what the department wants you to send, but it will always ask for a vita. In Unit 10 we gave suggestions for writing a CV.

Other Material

You want to provide things that make you stand out from other candidates, but do not want to overburden the search committee with stacks of paper that they may not have time to read. In most cases it is reasonable to include your teaching philosophy and a summary of the contents of your portfolio, even if these things were not requested.

Send reprints or preprints only if these were requested. An exception might be a particularly unique, high quality paper that shows you are involved in the scholarship of teaching.

Recommendation letters

Job ads often ask you to arrange to have some number of recommendations sent, and you will have a list of possible recommenders at the end of your CV. Of course, you will have obtained permission from these people. It will help them write a good letter if you give each recommender a copy of the job ad and your CV, and talk with them about the nature of the position for which you are applying.

The Line and Sinker

Congratulations! You have been invited for an interview. Now your goal is to provide first-hand evidence of your potential as a teacher, scholar, and an effective, thoughtful colleague.

Preparation

Do even *more homework* in preparation for your visit. Get a sense of the recent history of the University and the department. Find out if there are any significant issues under discussion, such as the need to develop an assessment plan, because you may have something to contribute. Know the names of the faculty, and their interests and expertise if the department is small enough. Often the web site will have photos.

Be prepared to present yourself well as a teacher. You can bring a larger version of your teaching portfolio, including a plan for the courses the department wants you to teach. In Unit 2 we suggested that you prepare a “sound bite” to use in response to questions about your teaching philosophy. You may be asked to teach a class, so have a topic in mind. Do not simply tell students about your research, unless you have been asked to do that. Instead, find out what the class has been studying and engage them in

that topic. Here you can demonstrate your skill in managing discussions, as well as your general knowledge of psychology. Practice these “job talks” as often as possible in front of a live audience.

You should be given a schedule for your visit. Telephone the person in charge of the job search if you have questions about the schedule or any other arrangements.

The Visit

Conduct yourself as a professional. This includes how you dress. Even if most of the faculty are very informal, others, including the administrators, will not be. Be on time for all appointments where punctuality is under your control. Conversations are friendly but do not involve personal disclosures. Be sensitive to boundary issues. For example, do not attend student parties or go bar-hopping with faculty. However, a quiet dinner with drinks, in moderation, is common and acceptable. Members of the host department want to see that you are a real person that they can get along with and enjoy. For some departments, this is a very important determinant of whether an offer is made...whether we like it or not.

You will be asked a lot of questions in your meetings with administrators, faculty, and students. Many of these questions can be anticipated:

- Why do you want to teach at our University?
- What type of student do you most like to work with?
- How do you deal with difficult students?
- Describe one of your successes as a teacher, and a failure.
- Where would you like to be in your career five or ten years from now?
- How would students describe a typical class that is taught by you?

- How do you envision yourself contributing to department and university service?
- What type of research projects will you be working on from day one at our learning institution? Can you involve students in your work? How might you do that?
- What does the term cultural diversity mean to you? How do you attempt to incorporate culture into your daily life as a teacher?
- What are your technology competencies and would you be prepared to teach on-line courses?

And you should have questions for those who interview you.

- You can ask a Dean about the strengths and prospects for the department, and its challenges (not weaknesses).
- If you have not been told the salary range, you can ask the Dean.
- Clarify the teaching load and service responsibilities with the department chair.
- Is mentoring provided for new faculty?
- Ask students about department strengths and ways to improve.
- Ask questions about specific types of work that increase your chances of achieving tenure and promotion.
- Inquire as to whether faculty members tend to collaborate with one another on research initiatives both within and across departments at the particular college or university where you are applying.

Ask about the timeframe for making hiring decisions.

Role Play Activity: Find someone who can act as a College Dean or Department Chairperson and ask that person to prepare questions for you, including those listed above. Engage in this role play for about twenty minutes. Ask another person to be an observer to provide feedback on your performance.

Your visit typically will conclude with a meeting with the department chair, search committee chair, or both, and a ride to the airport. These are good opportunities for final questions. You may be asked to give your impressions of the department and how you might fit in. Do not ask about your chances for getting the job. If you have other prospects, you are not obligated to say where they are.

A few days after you return home you might make a follow-up call to the department to thank them for their hospitality (which you already have done in a thank you letter) and find out if they need any other information. You might also find out whether their time frame for a decision has changed or not. Again, be professional, not ingratiating.

The hiring decision now is in the hands of others, but there still are a few things you can do. Keep a record of what you learned on the visit, with positives and negatives about the job to compare with other opportunities. If this is your only shot, be sure it is a position you really can fit. Pursue unanswered important questions.

If you feel a tug on your line and get an offer, it's time to land your job. The offer should be both by telephone and in a formal letter. You respond graciously, but not

effusively, on the phone, making sure that all your important questions have been answered and you are clear about the nature of the contract. You should be given a reasonable number of days to respond and consider the offer unless there is no doubt in your mind. If you want to know how your salary offer compares to what others are earning, go to the APA web site and find the Center for Workforce Studies.

We hope we have not overdone our fishing metaphor, but there is one more comparison to make. Many fishers use the “catch-and-release” method. They just want to play with the fish, but not eat it. In a job search, this practice is highly unethical. A University will have invested significant person hours and resources in their search and your visit. If you are not interested, they should know that immediately. Barring extenuating circumstances, when you accept an offer, you must take it.

Helping you get started in your new position is beyond the scope of our program. We do recommend two excellent books to guide you written by Robert Boice: *The New Faculty Member* (Boice, 1992) and *Advice for New Faculty Members* (Boice, 2000). The sub-title of the second book is, *nihil nimus*, which loosely translated means everything in moderation or don't try to do too much. That's advice we strongly support.

The Future

What does a career in teaching look like? An interviewer may ask you where you think your career will be in the future, and now is not too early to begin thinking about that. There are several good sources where you can read autobiographical accounts of teachers' academic lives (Keller, 1994; Parini, 2005; Sternberg, 1997; Tompkins, 1996).

The Society for the Teaching of Psychology e-book series has two volumes of teachers' autobiographies, which can be readily accessed on the STP web site.

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