Editorial - *Ray Williams, LTD Officer*

Well, the days are getting longer and soon we will be basking in the warmth of another New Brunswick Spring. In keeping with the impending season change, Teaching Perspectives is taking on a new image, one we hope you find appealing. As always, we invite your feedback.

In this edition we are focusing on teaching strategies. I would like to thank our colleagues, Colm Kelly, Roger Moore, Jean Sauvageau, Joe Masciulli, Alice Allain, Sara MacDonald and Brad Cross who have contributed to make our Spring 2004 Teaching Perspectives a rich and varied resource for us all. Special recognition is extended to Tony Tremblay whose name was inadvertently omitted from the article listings for our Fall 2003 edition.

I would also like to encourage everyone to apply for LTD grants. The funds are there to assist you in improving your skills, to conduct your own 'action research', or the many other creative ways you may have to enhance learning and teaching for your classes. If you have any doubts about whether the ideas you are considering might qualify, please contact any member of the LTD committee for assistance. A reminder that the guidelines for applying for grants are posted on our LTD web site http://people.stthomasu.ca/~7ELTD/

Teaching Perspectives is also available on line on the St. Thomas web page http://www.stthomasu.ca/publications/teaching/index.htm

Ray Williams
LTD Officer

ERRATA:
I would like to point out that the date for the third Teaching Conversation hosted by the LTD committee was listed incorrectly on the flyer distributed in September. The sixth and final conversation will be held on March 19th and the topic will be "Where Has all the Common Time Gone - How can we make decisions when we have no opportunity to meet and discuss?" I hope to see you there.

Announcements:

March 22nd - Front of Edmund Casey Hall: 6:00 PM
Recognition of Teachers Excellence - The LTD Committee will be publically recognizing all nominees for the St. Thomas University Excellence in Teaching Award for the 2003-2004 academic year. We invite all colleagues to drop by the luncheon following AAU speaker's presentation, so you may offer your congratulations.

Dr. Kate Frego, **Atlantic Association of Universities Lecture Tour**.
'An integrated approach to developing oral communication skills in an atmosphere that reduces anxiety'.

Kate is one of last year's AAU award winners and will be coming to STU as part of her Atlantic Provinces lecture tour.

We invite interested faculty members to the lecture and the luncheon immediately following.

Effective Teaching Institute
Presenter Patricia Cranton (UNBSJ) will discuss *Authentic Teaching* at the upcoming Effective Teaching Institute. Sponsored by the University of New Brunswick - Saint John Campus, the institute will be held at the Villa Madonna on Tuesday, May 18, 2004. For further information, please contact Terri Robinson at 453-4744 or by e-mail at terrir@unb.ca.

June 16th -19th , 2004 **Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education** 2004 Conference - University of Ottawa
"Experiencing the Richness of the University Mosaic: from Diversity to Individuality"

LTD Officer Applications
The Learning and Teaching Development Committee is inviting applications from faculty members who are interested in serving as the LTD officer for a two year term from July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2006. Letters of interest may be forwarded to Dr. Roger Moore, Chair of the LTD Committee, by the deadline of May 1st, 2004.

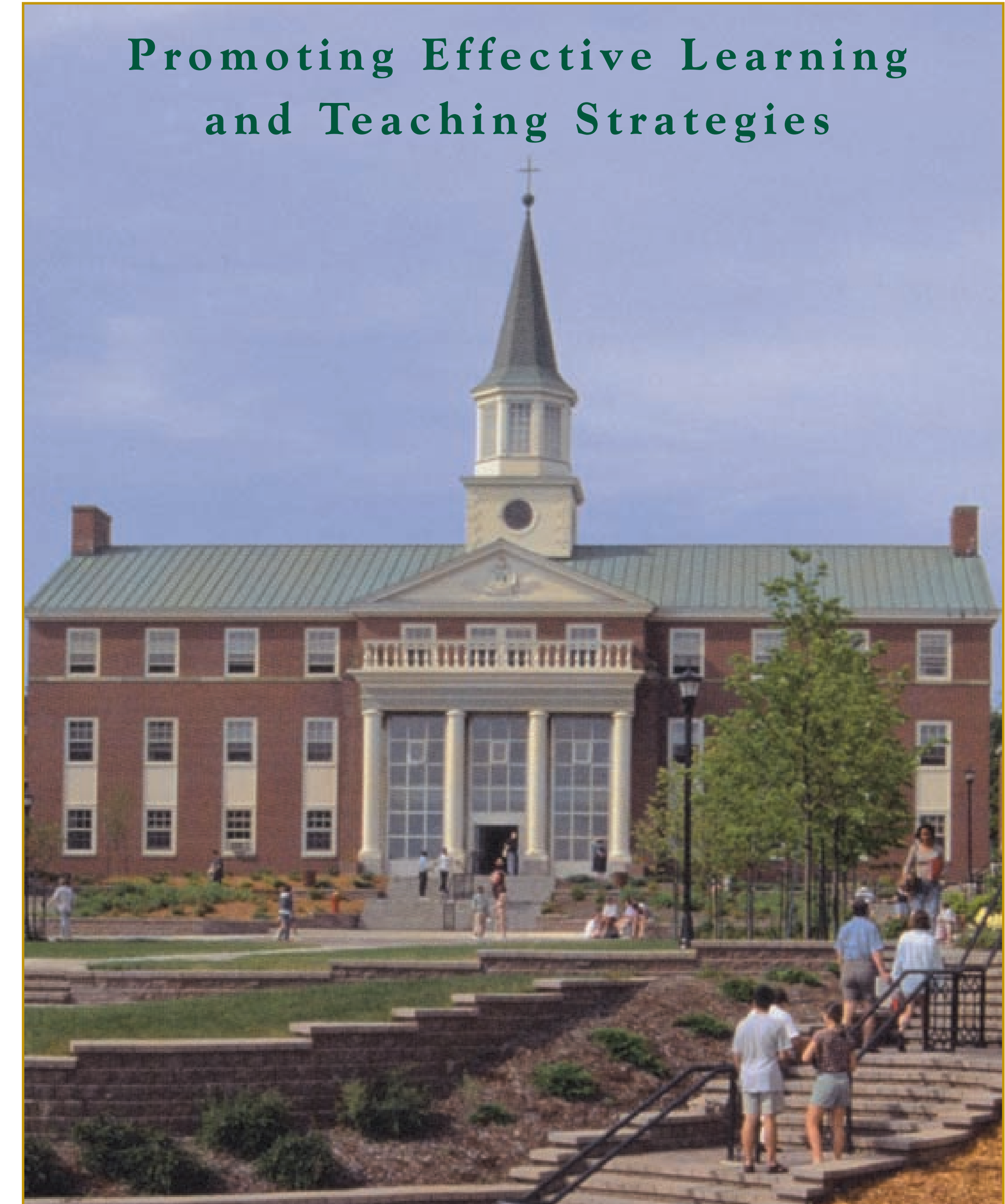
Teaching Perspectives

St. Thomas University Spring 2004

Inside This Issue

- Teaching Derrida 1
- Yellow 2
- Teaching Tips 3
- Strategies for Teaching in French in an Anglophone Environment 4
- A Note on Liberating Teaching Strategies 5
- A *Journal* in FSL Class? Why Not? 6
- Why not to use the Socratic Method 8
- Innovation for innovation's sake? 7
- Teaching Strategies in Large Classes 9
- The Old Man and the C 10

Promoting Effective Learning and Teaching Strategies



ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY
Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada

Teaching Derrida - *Sociology Department*

I recently taught a Sociology 3000 level course ("Derrida and the social") on Jacques Derrida, who is a philosopher by training, while I am a sociologist. Derrida's work is obsessively concerned with philosophy and certain literary modernists, and more recently with religion, and he has also addressed issues in legal theory, architecture and visual art, while also more recently, he has extensively addressed issues in social and political philosophy and theory. It was this latter area that I was keen to teach. None of his work readily corresponds to the major styles and idioms of any of these areas, and thus everywhere there is a difficulty in 'receiving' his work.

How to teach such a multi-faceted corpus? Additionally, while clearly 'based' in philosophy and an experience of literature, Derrida's work above all makes tremble, and dislocates, any notion of a home base or a proper foundation. This complex, 'doubled' or 'folded' relationship to what might be considered his "own" disciplines, and also to our most apparently ordinary and cherished ways of being - being at home, being at one with oneself - is extremely difficult to communicate concisely. My 15 students were drawn largely and equally from philosophy and sociology, with a handful from other disciplines, including religious studies, English, economics and psychology. To sum up my dilemma: the subject-matter of the course, in essence and centrally, rather than accidentally or merely empirically, does not belong to any discipline, while the university, the professor and the students live entirely in disciplines.

My solutions to these multiple and related problems? My theoretical solution, and the basis of my current research, is that the "social" is a very good term, for this very strange doubled structure of belonging and not-belonging which characterizes Derrida's work, what he investigates, and, by implication, the "social" itself. My practical solution: I chose mainly Derrida books in which he centrally and extensively addressed canonical writers in the history of the social sciences, such as Marcel Mauss and Marx . In these texts, Derrida also addressed works of philosophy and of literature. I had the students read excerpts from the 'target' social science texts, and secondarily, the literary texts. The philosophy, such as Nietzsche and Heidegger, that is everywhere in Derrida's work, we could not address directly, as then this would have become the course. I trusted that the philosophical embeddedness of Derrida would explicate itself in the reading and especially in the discussions. Central to my teaching anyway is the insistence that there is no absolute division between social theory and philosophy. I also trusted that the consistency and continuity of Derrida's thought would make itself evident in the reading of what were very diverse texts, rather than making this consistency an explicit theme of the course.

Then we read the Derrida texts seminar-style, and relied mainly on their 'self-explicating quality' - the fact that Derrida's texts explain both themselves and their target texts when subject to a patient and careful reading. This is certainly a paradox, given that Derrida is one of the most difficult of living thinkers. Thus ultimately my pedagogy was not much different than when I teach Weber or Durkheim, but I was able to conduct a seminar instead of lectures. Indeed my text-based and reading-intensive pedagogy is undoubtedly better suited to Derrida than to mainstream social science, so perhaps this is the course I am destined to teach!

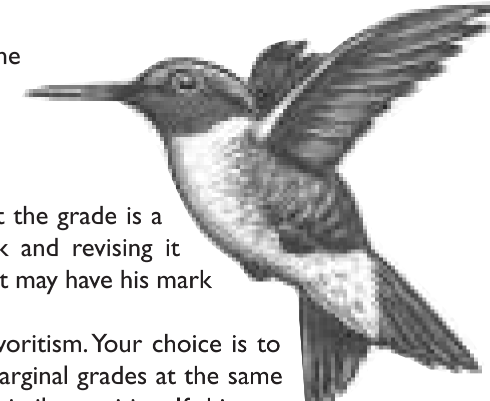
The real problem is that the university so thoroughly lives and breathes in disciplines.How could I coax the students to respond to the singularity of a great thinker and the implications of his thought for how we approach the "social", when one's disciplinary background encourages one to either assimilate [even when done kindly or generously] or reject everything that is both new and strange? To my surprise, the philosophy students were no better at responding to Derrida than the sociology students. Indeed my own sociology students - perhaps ' softened up' by my other courses! - and those with a taste for literature, were at least equal to any others when it came to letting these demanding, rigorous and wonderful texts lead them a little. Or perhaps it would be both fairer and more accurate to say that the best students, regardless of discipline, responded best. Of course, who knows which if any students will respond better, or at all, to Derrida in the years to come. (How strange that we "measure" our teaching at an instant in time!) I should add that I consider the course to have been very successful, perhaps partly because strong students selected it.

As I revise this course before making it a permanent offering, I have to grapple with the disciplinary 'being' of knowledge and teaching, which cannot nor should not be dispensed with, and which I suspect even interdisciplinary courses and programmes do not fundamentally displace. Perhaps we need a new category of 'Courses-at-Large,' which each time they are developed or altered could be assessed as to which disciplines they might count in for credit. Teaching Derrida will remain a discomfiting exercise, as would be the case, I believe, for many great thinkers. We should grapple with ways to reduce such discomfiture. Perhaps this is as it should be.

The Old Man and the C - *Earnest Hummingway*

The young man sits in the old man's office and explains: "There's this student. He has a C+, not quite good enough for a B-, and he needs a B- to continue in his field of specialization. Well, I explain the marking system to him and he sits there and cries. Now I feel very bad about it. What should I do?"

The old man ponders the eternal problem of how to address the marginal grade and suggests that there are several possible ways to resolve the situation.



Extra work: Ask for an extra paper, give a small quiz, even give a brief oral interview. If the answers are made in a satisfactory fashion, move the student up to the desired grade, especially if the student's attendance has been good and the mark differential between B- and C+ is not enormous.

Review the grade: Just check through the marks and reassure yourself and the student that the grade is a good assessment. During the review process, there may be grounds for changing the mark and revising it upwards. Be aware, and make the student aware, that the reverse may also apply and the student may have his mark down-graded.
Do not play favorites: If you offer this service for one person, then you can be accused of favoritism. Your choice is to review all the marks in the class (tedious, especially if the class is large), or to review all the marginal grades at the same level. The second option is more reasonable as there may be other students in the same or a similar position. If this one student stands out as being closest to the grade he desires and only one or two students are in a position to move up with him, then adjusting one or two grades might be a reasonable course of action.

Recommend that the student take the course again to improve the grade: This is a perfectly normal course of action, especially if the student has not grasped the material well and really does wish to continue. In fact, this may be of great benefit to the student, long term, although it will seem like a punishment at present.

Probation: In a small section, where you can follow the student's progress, place the student on probation and raise his mark appropriately only if he does well on the next set of assignments. This may work in the second half of a 6 hour credit course, especially if later work is more difficult and is handled in an improved fashion. However, it may not work so well if the course does not continue into a second half or if the teaching unit is large and teacher and student can lose contact far too easily.

Grow a thick skin: The problem with leniency is that word of mouth soon confirms that you are a soft touch and the next thing you know, everybody wants their mark raised. This is clearly not good. If you wish to avoid debate about your grades, put your foot down. No arguments. Tell your student that if he wishes to appeal his grade there are guidelines in the calendar and that he must follow them. Remind him that such action will eventually take the matter out of your hands and place it in the hands of a committee.

One of the problems with a small university is that professors are faced with these choices on a regular basis. The route that an individual takes to resolve these problems must be the one with which that individual is most comfortable. Some teachers are not happy changing grades when they are set. Others are not happy with the emotional weight of allegedly "ruining" a young person's career hanging around their necks. Some faculty do not like to be bullied. Other faculty members enjoy debating and discussing the grades with their students.

In the old man's case, he has a tendency to let the heart rule the head in these circumstances. This means that he will usually choose an option that benefits the student, even if it means more work for himself. He does not think a professor loses face when moved by generosity or genuine care for the students. But genuine care, in certain circumstances, might mean tough love; and tough love might mean requiring that the grade of C+ stand or the course be retaken.

After all, at the extreme edge of hypothesis and example, the old man is not comforted by being aware that the surgeon wielding the scalpel above his washed and disinfected abdomen only got the B- necessary to continue in his chosen career in surgery because he broke into tears in his old professor's office at the teaching hospital and the professor was so moved that the grade in the appendectomy course was raised from a C+ (change career) to a B- (carry on cutting')!

Teaching Strategies in Large Classes, - *Brad Cross, History Department*

When I first came to STU five years ago, I thought I had put teaching large classes behind me. Up to that point I taught at a couple of large American universities where lecture halls of 125 were nothing unusual. In these large classes students typically met once a week in hour-long tutorials holding 12 or 15 people, outside of the formal lecture environment. But at St. Thomas, I expected smaller classes, and students expected much more personal attention. In this spirit, I designed even my introductory and advanced classes with significant discussion components and collaborative elements that promoted active learning rather than passive listening.

In my first year at STU, I got lucky in terms of class size. Maybe it was because I was new here and students were less likely to sign up for courses with "the new guy" or maybe it was because my courses were not listed in the calendar yet (I had been hired in March). Whatever the case, my enrollments stood around 25 or 30 per course. We "engaged" the readings, held formal and informal debates, and had seminar style discussions on some of the readings I assigned. There were even a few field trips around town to examine local historical places.

The next year, all that changed. Suddenly I faced classes of 60 or 70 students, with as many as 200 enrolled across my three courses. Only one of these was an introductory course. The syllabi I designed for my fall semester had to be trashed. We could not work through the material in the same ways I anticipated doing with small classes. In the span of a week or two I revised my syllabi to include some elements of discussion and collaboration, but continued to grapple with the question of how much to depend on the traditional lecture format.

In this brief piece, I don't have the space to describe elaborate teaching strategies, but I will at least share one approach that I think has some merit. I give collaborative individual/group quizzes. Sort of. Originally I adopted this strategy to get students to read the textbook - so that I didn't have to deliver "content" through lecturing - and we could spend our class time discussing the implications of the readings for the day.

Here's how it works. I assign daily readings from a text or reader (as we all do) and on a given day I announce a quiz. Students first take the quiz on their own. The quiz itself usually consists of five multiple choice questions and a pair of short answer questions based explicitly on the readings due for the day. The multiple choice questions usually require students to synthesize what they have read, identifying what was important or useful for understanding the topic at hand. The short answer questions push the students beyond the readings to offer some analysis of what they read. After the allotted time, usually about 10-12 minutes, I collect their individual quizzes. Then they form into their predetermined groups (of between 5 and 8 students depending on class size, that were picked randomly in the first or second week of class) and I hand each group a single quiz response sheet. As a group, they must collaborate to answer the quiz since I will allow only one response per question. I allot much more time for this testing - at least 15 minutes, and sometimes as much as 20 minutes if the questions are particularly controversial. The total quiz mark is then the product of a students individual quiz result combined with their group score. I let them vote at the beginning of the semester how they want the results factored. Usually they try to go for "safety in numbers" by pushing for a greater "group" mark than "individual" mark. Often it's 60% Group, 40% Individual. Rarely the other way around. This semester it is 50/50.

As part of a series of strategies for teaching large classes, this one seems to work pretty well. I discovered that many students used their quiz groups as study groups for midterms and portfolio assignments, and their group becomes a place to forge an initial "public" identity in the classroom environment. I find better participation in general classroom discussions with large enrollment courses where I have employed these collaborative quizzes. I also think they do more reading when they use it to contribute to group success. And frankly, it also shifts the burden of reading discipline to peers and away from me. While many of my courses are more "process" than "content" driven, I think this approach adapts pretty well to either of these priorities. If nothing else, quiz groups help students find a few allies in the large classroom environment.

Yellow - *Roger Moore, Spanish Section, Romance Languages Department*

The objects of this particular series of teaching strategies, which I use in the third year Advanced Reading course, are (1) to demonstrate how to read in depth; (2) to demonstrate how perception changes, across languages, for each student; (3) to show the difficulty of trying to reproduce, in words, a visible world; and (4) to develop a series of links between topics of increasing importance and difficulty.

I begin by writing the word *amarillo* on the board. The students happily tell me that *amarillo* means **yellow**. I then ask each student in turn to explain what they understand by *amarillo* / **yellow**. Describing a colour is surprisingly difficult, especially in another language, so we soon resort to describing the colour of things that are yellow: Evening Grosbeaks, American Goldfinches, Yellow Canaries, the eye of a daisy, the moon, sunshine, etc. It does help to have relatively small classes for this exercise, because then the teacher can work with individuals and help develop their conversational language skills. In a larger class, this work will be done in groups (little or no correction), and the groups will report back to the class. Group work is relatively easy to set up, of course, but individual contact between student and teacher is lost when group work dominates; as a result, language contact tends to be more inter-active and peer driven, but much less accurate.

When we have almost exhausted this exercise, I give to each student a copy of *Hola*, the glossy Spanish society magazine. There is always a flurry of interest and activity whenever *Hola* appears. Students read the cartoons, look at the many and wonderful pictures, read the headlines of the stories, admire the glossy advertisements ... But on this occasion, I ask them to scan *Hola* and keep a record of the pages on which the colour yellow appears. In an eighty page *Hola*, there are usually thirty or forty shades, tints, hues of yellow, and when the students have understood the incredible richness of the colours grasped by the camera and transferred to the human eye, we turn to a brief description of how colours are composed on the computer screen and of just how many colours the computer can actually reproduce. There is generally someone in the class who understands the colour process better than I do and this, of course, always gives the group a good feeling!

Now we move to the central point and I circulate Juan Ramón Jiménez's poem *Primavera amarilla* / **Yellow Spring** to the students. Here it is, in my own translation:

Yellow Spring
April arrived full of yellow flowers ...
The stream was yellow, the path was yellow,
and the hill, and the children's graves
and the orchard where love used to live.

The sun anointed the world with the yellow
of its fallen rays. There were gilded lilies
and aureate water, warm and sparkling.
Yellow butterflies perched on yellow roses.

Yellow garlands climbed yellow trees.
Daylight was a gift of golden perfume
in a glistening awakening of life.
Amongst the bones of the dead,
God was opening his yellow hands.

The next task is to place the poem, in Spanish, but side by side with one or more English translations, onto a Bristol Board. Around the edges of the Bristol Board we place all the swatches of yellow that we have by now cut out with scissors from *Hola*. We organize these colours and place them in roughly the same order that we find them on the computer colour template. Then we attach a thin thread from each of the sixteen occurrences of the word *amarillo* / **yellow,** or its synonyms (gold, golden, gilded, aureate) to the colour on our swatches that we imagine it to be.

Then we re-ask the initial question: what does *amarillo* mean? But we no longer get the same answer. Light breaks where no light shines and smiles light up the classroom.

In terms of the linkage of progressively more difficult topics, there are several printed variants to this poem. An additional exercise, at a higher level of stylistic analysis, asks students to determine the amount of golden and yellow light which is shed in each of the variants. This exercise leads into the de-construction and re-construction of the poetic text and from there to the roots of poetic creativity and manuscript revision: why did the poet choose version A not version B for his final text? What differentiates the two versions? From here, we can move into other poems and passages of prose that express the colour yellow. And from yellow we can move into other colours of the spectrum.

"Intelijencia," Juan Ramón Jiménez once wrote, *"Dame el nombre exacto de las cosas."* / **"Intelligence: give me the exact name for things."** From here, if the moment is ripe, we can move to the poet's search for *le mot juste, la palabra exacta, the right word in the right place at the right time*. This in turn, can lead into a discussion on the current poverty of language and the need for students to develop language skills in their own mother tongue. This search, in turn, can lead us into the logical positivism of A. J. Ayer and into Bertrand Russell's ideas on the **meaning of meaning**.

Or, it can be followed by an introduction, however brief, to the philosophical roots of early twentieth century Spanish literature. These are described by Basilio de Pablos *[El tiempo en la poesía de Juan Ramón Jiménez*. Madrid: Gredos. 1965: 76-77] as the influence of Western philosophy as it flows from Plato, Aristotle, and St. Thomas Aquinas to Leibniz's "being who is capable of action" and the "se faisant" human of Bergson, from whom we arrive at the "possibilities of being" of those Existentialist philosophers [Scheler, Jaspers, Heidegger], for whom humans rather than existing, *do* and *create*. This act of creation, or in the case of Juan Ramón Jiménez, the poet's recognition of, and praise for, the role of the creator, leads back to the old Platonic idea of the participation of the Supreme Being in the structure of universal beauty: a theme which is omnipresent and ubiquitous in the creative work of Juan Ramón Jiménez, the Spanish Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature (in 1956).

Teaching Tips

"Know your students by name, when possible."
"Don't talk to yourself when you're writing on the board."
"Write clearly and plan to organize your blackboard space."
"Plan your classes in advance."
"Don't try and teach more than two or three concepts in any one class."
"Always have plenty of examples."
"When possible make personal contact with your students."
"Always have more material than you can use."
"Know and use the whole classroom space."
"Don't conceal yourself behind your desk or hide behind your lectern."
"Vary your voice, your tone, your delivery."
"Break class instruction time up into small bite sized manageable segments."
"Plan activities and breaks for questions."
"Do not be afraid to ask your students if they feel the correct information is coming across and test on the spot if necessary."
"Better to ask questions and correct mistakes early, while the class is still in progress, than to wait two or three months for the final course evaluation to find out what was going wrong."
"React to the students in your class. Learn to read their hesitations and silences."
"Be aware of any cultural differences that might affect the way in which you work with individual students."
"Come to class early and talk to the students as they arrive."
"Stay behind for a couple of minutes afterwards and give them time and space to approach you."
"Make sure your equipment is in working order before the class starts."
"Organize, organize, organize. Organize even the spontaneous exercises!"
"State what you are going to do. Do it. Tell everyone what you have done."
"Revise what you did yesterday. State what you will do today. Tell people what they will learn tomorrow."

Many of these points, and many others, can be found in Alan Gedalof's book Teaching Large Classes. The LTD strongly recommends this publication to all whose peace of mind is threatened by the increasing numbers of students whom they teach. The LTD also invites you to form a list of your own Teaching Tips and to send it to the LTD Officer for publication in the next issue of *Teaching Perspectives*.

Why Not to Use the Socratic Method - *Sara MacDonald, Political Science Department*

Socrates was put to death not purely for what he said, but for the manner in which he said it. As such, we might be dubious about adopting his method within our classes, particularly in light of the effect it may have on class evaluations, one of our own forms of the death sentence. Nonetheless, the Socratic method is particularly useful in the quest for a liberal education or for creating free individuals. The difficulty lies in that we would not all choose to be freed.

On the surface, the Socratic method seems innocuous; what after all is dangerous about proceeding in class by means of asking questions and getting students' responses? Isn't this the basis of an interactive classroom and the grounds for the much loved class discussion? Presumably if this were the whole of the process, Socrates would not have been charged with corrupting the young and would have died by natural causes. It might thus be useful to clarify what the Socratic method is not.

First, the Socratic method is not asking obvious or "text book" questions and having students give the singularly correct response. Searching for an account as to how human beings should live, Socrates' primary concerns do not have answers that can be memorized and regurgitated at will. While the Socratic method begins with the obvious (his favorite examples seem to be of doctors and shoemakers) the dialectic process proceeds from the self-evident into the more complex and controversial. Hence, its seductive nature. One begins talking about the art of medicine and ends talking about the nature of the soul. Drawn in by the apparent simplicity of the questions, Socrates' interlocutors soon find themselves confronted with topics with seemingly no clear answers, but of great importance. The effect of which can be discomforting, to say the least.

In addition, the Socratic method is normally not about presenting answers. While raising some of the most difficult and interesting questions about human existence, Socratic dialogues often end without an answer and in much confusion. Having raised to his interlocutors' minds a question of great importance and then demonstrating the inadequacy of their responses, Socrates often leaves them with only the awareness that they now know that they don't know. While the purpose of this technique is to generate curiosity or wonder in the heart of his students such that they think through these issues on their own, it can leave grade-aware students somewhat dissatisfied.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Socratic method is not merely about generating discussion in which students are free to express their views. While Socrates begins by asking questions designed to have his listeners express their points of view, he then moves to demonstrate the difficulties with these opinions. Moreover, even though Socrates often does not delineate what he believes to be the correct answer, dialogues are conducted in such a manner that observant listeners are directed to ideas that are grounded in solid arguments and thus more closely approximate a true response. Participants thus experience the uncomfortable situation of having the inadequacies of their assumed points of view brought to light in a classroom among their peers.

Ultimately, the point of a Socratic dialogue is to move interlocutors from positions of belief, or opinions they accept without reflection, to arguments that have their basis in both thought and, hopefully, the truth. Such a movement requires listeners to be actively engaged, thinking through the grounds of the arguments themselves, or else they risk merely exchanging one belief for another. As such, the role of the professor is a strangely disjointed and difficult one. While our primary role is not to generate answers, we are to prod students to find these answers themselves. This involves forcing students to leave behind beliefs they have often wholeheartedly and unthinkingly accepted for long tracts of time and enter a realm where uncertainty seems to be the only certain thing. Moreover, we have to nimbly avoid creating despair over the lack of such answers, and rather generate a desire to seek these answers out. Even without the fear of death, such a process should be daunting to most of us.

e) At the novice and basic levels, students are allowed to write their reflections in English. At an intermediate level, they express their thoughts in French. At all levels, however, the personalized dictionary (grammar rules, definitions, test corrections, etc.) is written only in the second language.

f) Since this exercise is very time-consuming for the instructor, I would have some reservations administering it in "large" classes, which I consider to be enrollments over 25 students.

g) A *journal* has been used in the following courses: FREN 1206 (novice / basic level), FREN 1506 (basic / basic plus), FREN 1556 (French immersion), FREN 2306 (intermediate - reading), FREN 2336 (intermediate - speaking). In the current year, only FREN 1506 has a *journal*; the reason being FREN 3326 (comparative stylistics) is a "large" class. Even so, I am encouraging the students taking this course to maintain one.

Conclusion

Once students understand the reasons for creating a *journal*, they believe it is a good exercise. As an instructor, I enjoy reading student *journals*. It often reveals other aspects of their learning process that would otherwise not have been noticed, such as motivation, perseverance, interest, sense of humor, discipline - qualities of a successful language learner. Also, as language instructors, we often ask ourselves which methods to adopt next in order to come closer to reaching our Holy Grail, of improving students' language proficiency. In fact, this exercise helps develop students' independent language learning strategies and guides them in their learning of French. By keeping a *journal*, students are indeed more responsible for their learning. So, why not have a *journal* in a FSL class?

Innovation for innovation's sake? - *Julia Torrie, History Department*

In late February, I went to Ottawa to represent STU's Learning and Teaching Development Committee at a conference at the University of Ottawa. The conference, called "The Educational Chrysalis," was part of an on-going series on learning, teaching and technology, partially sponsored by McGraw-Hill Ryerson. The topic of this particular event was innovation - what is it, how does it happen, what can be done to encourage it in university teaching? I approached the conference, I confess, with both interest and a certain amount of scepticism. Innovation is useful, I thought, but only if it serves a purpose. Technology is much the same. I could see a multitude of ways in which new teaching methods fostered by the internet and smart classrooms might improve university education, but I did not want to spend two days being told that with the addition of a web-page, all my teaching problems would be solved. I need not have been so concerned. From the opening keynote address through the final summary panel, I was impressed by the degree to which both innovation and technology, despite their high billing, seemed to be secondary concerns. Learning and teaching were really on the agenda, and the conference was about finding the best ways to encourage both. Innovation may not beneficial in and of itself, but it seems to me that the experimentation that is associated with innovation often is. What I saw at the conference was that a willingness to innovate goes hand in hand with openness to different styles of learning, variety in teaching methods, and significant improvements in both these areas. Unless new methods are tried, one can never really know how much potential they have for improving students' education. Even if, in the end, one decides to go back to the old methods, one is at least making a conscious choice, based on a knowledge of alternatives. Without experimentation, stagnation will ensue. The overall conclusion of the conference was essentially this - if universities want to retain their place as educational leaders, experimentation and innovation in teaching and learning are essential. They are not essential for their own sake, but because of their potential to improve both teaching and learning. To support this, universities must encourage experimental efforts through course releases for new course preparation, increased funding for learning and teaching development activities, teaching awards, and mentorship programs. Only faculty members who know that their efforts in these areas are valuable and appreciated will be willing to take the risks and invest the time that innovation requires.

Strategies for Teaching in French in an Anglophone Environment - *Jean Sauvageau, Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice*

For the past four years, I have been given the opportunity by St Thomas University to teach some criminology courses in my first language, French. I admit that after being hired by the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice within an Anglophone institution, I never dared dream about that opportunity. When offered, French criminology courses have so far attracted a small but solid group of students. The size of the class (between eight and fifteen students at a time) has guaranteed a very active and dynamic class; different from that experienced in the more common, large sections in Criminology and Criminal Justice at STU.

Now, I have to admit that once passed the excitement that followed the confirmation of my teaching criminology courses in French and, even more so, after the first year of teaching those courses, the reality proved to be a somewhat sobering experience. The first difficulty encountered here is a near universal one for those teaching scientific subjects in French. There are almost no textbooks, to speak of, published in French on criminological topics, even those as common as general introduction, police, or correctional services. From the beginning, I insisted on providing students with French texts, but the option of adopting one textbook that will cover all or at least most of the issues I wished to address in a course is not there. I have to scramble to come up with a variety of French texts published in different formats (mainly journal articles, book chapters, governmental documents, and private agencies' reports) in order to put together a reader for each course. One advantage is that I can pretty much tailor the reading topics to my own specifications. However, one major drawback is the wide variety in the writing styles one has to cope with. On the one hand, a crucial topic or significant text may come in the form of a highly esoteric, peer reviewed journal article which leaves students–especially those in their first years of university–despondent. My task is spelled out for me in this case–summarize and simplify the author's argument in class discussions.

On the other hand, governmental documents can present a somewhat misinformed, institutionally biassed, and unbalanced point of view. Again, my task is spelled out for me: supplementing the argumentation with other points of view. The issue of the class readings represents only the tip of the iceberg in this case. When the time comes for the students to do their own research, in order to write their assignments, the paucity of Francophone scientific literature, already significant in the best supplied Francophone libraries, makes it impossible to demand that they use French texts only. As a result, the students end up playing ‹‹translator›› as much as ‹‹criminologist››. One way I found to minimize the problem is not to demand that they translate the direct citations they use in their papers.

When it comes down to the actual in-class activities, either lectures or discussions, I do make sure, in as much as I can remember to do it or realize that I need to do it, to indicate the French and English equivalents of specific terms. It is worth mentioning them since the students are bound to encounter those terms in English eventually and this could spare them some puzzlement. I do this based on my own experience as an undergraduate student who transited from an Anglophone community college to a Francophone criminology programme at the University of Ottawa where it took me a little while to figure out that the Freudian French terms *ça*, moi and *surmoi* used by my psychological theory course instructor were simply what was called the Id, Ego and Superego in English, and with which I was fully familiar.

One last point I wish to mention here with respect to the challenge of teaching in French in an Anglophone environment is that pertains to help for students outside of class. This is certainly the most frustrating aspect the students and I have to deal with. As much as it is expected that students learning in English will receive remedial help outside the classroom with studying, reading and writing in English; it is far from obvious that an Anglophone institution, such as STU, offering courses in French on an *ad hoc* basis, will be in a position to help students encountering difficulties with the French language. As much as I can see that it is my task to teach students the basics of criminological knowledge, critical reading and scientific writing, I do not consider the teaching of basic French (or English) grammar my role. But while I can suggest to students in my other courses, those taught in English, who are experiencing significant linguistic difficulties to seek the help offered on campus, my students in the courses taught in French have no such options.

All of the points raised above are reminders that education does not begin and end in the classroom, and that catering to specific groups generates a series of requirements, creating more needs than were expected at the outset. This is a challenge which demands creativity and flexibility on my part and on the part of the students; a challenge I am willing to continue taking up as long as the University, and Francophone and Francophile students alike, will allow me. I shall always be grateful to the University and my departmental colleagues for their support in this endeavour, even when, from a strict administrative point of view, it would make a lot more sense for me to teach those courses in English to help lighten the burden of high enrollment so common in criminology courses.

A Note on a Liberating Teaching Strategy - *Joe Masciulli, Department of Political Science*

In my teaching experience, especially in teaching international politics and human rights at St. Thomas and elsewhere, I have discovered that playing the devil's advocate is a creative teaching strategy which contributes much to the adventure of a liberal education. A "devil's advocate" in general is "a person who champions the less accepted cause for the sake of argument" **(Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th edition)**. This strategy is used by a professor who desires to challenge his or her students to defend their reasoning against different points of view (see, for example,www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/P4_4.html).

Above all, this strategy that seeks to extend student thinking counters moral and political dogmatism and a pre-job mentality. Some students think they have all the answers to issues of ethics and politics and that there is no need to investigate further: the absoluteness of human rights or relativism are the prevalent answers put forward dogmatically to ethical questions; that only democracy is good, and that the U.S.A. is the source of all global evils are typical dogmatic answers given to political questions. On the other hand, the pre-job mentality is centered in practicality; it is the mentality that education at STU should be a straight-forward, predictable, and a pre-job process: you tell me the answers you want to the questions you ask in your lectures-discussions; and let me be happy with a high grade for giving you back those answers; that will let me get into a program—here at STU, or elsewhere immediately after graduation—that will result in a job.

Both unthinking dogmatism and narrow-minded job-seeking are antithetical to "liberal education." Liberal education is an intellectual **adventure** of becoming free of the biases of established texts and contexts, and learning to question all authoritative answers. The ideal of liberal education is that one should arrive at one's own reasonable answers based on one's own grasp of the evidence. The strategy of playing the devil's advocate can be a pillar of liberal education-if it is intelligently used. Such intelligent use of the devil's advocate strategy requires one to distinguish it from neutrality about reasonable answers. Playing the devil's advocate does not require professors and students to suspend judgment or be neutral about the best reasonable answers to profound political questions. For example, fundamental questions regarding current Bush Administration U.S. foreign policy decisions, and the pros and cons of globalization need to be answered. That necessity is grounded in our (partial) responsibility, as intelligent beings, for the future of our planet (and soon for that of the Moon and Mars). I make it clear to students that I think there are answers that are very probably true and right--for example, that the Iraq War (2003) was a strategic mistake for U.S. hegemony, as well as an illegitimate and unjust war.

However, playing devil's advocate, for the sake of argument, I take up the perspective of the Bush Administration and try to clarify it in depth. Dramatically, I reflect on arguments advanced, for example, by Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz, who stresses that the elimination of Saddam will give the Iraqi people the opportunity to build a free and democratic society that will change the course of history in the highly conflict-ridden Middle East.

I also argue that globalization is a process that will most probably not be reversed (short of a global catastrophe) and that its negative, unjust and unfair aspects can and should be eliminated. However, playing the devil's advocate, I dramatically argue for the perspective of deglobalization, clarifying in depth the proposals of activists and analysts who argue for a fundamental shift towards a decentralized, pluralistic system of non-market-oriented global economics. I make it clear to students that their grade evaluation will be based not on agreeing with my answer, but rather on defending their reasoning about whatever answer they arrive at, against competing points of view.

One may object to the devil's advocate teaching strategy on the grounds that it confuses students about world-historical questions. However, I think our students are very talented and extraordinarily capable of learning from a plurality of perspectives. Dealing with such complexity will deepen their convictions, clarify their ideals, and encourage them to engage in debate and dialogue with their intellectual and moral-political opponents. Indeed, dealing with moral and political complexity systematically in a liberal arts university results in less rhetorical warfare--that is, an intellectual environment which is positive for both students and professors in quest of what is true and good.

Teaching Perspectives

A journal in a FSL class? Why not? - *Alice Allain, French Section, Romance Languages Department*

"But why should we write a *journal*? I don't have anything to say. What should I put in it?" Early in the session, students in my French Second Language classes are reluctant to start this exercise. They have to be persuaded that they are responsible for learning "la langue de Molière". In response to their resistance, I ask them: "Why are you studying French? What are your strengths? Do you have any strategies to attain your goals?" Discussion follows. "Yes, the more you know about yourself, the better your performance will be." Quoting the wise adage *Connais-toi toi-même*, I tell them: "*Know thyself*. By setting personal objectives and verifying your achievement, the *journal* will be the memory of your learning process." Acquiring a second language takes time and perseverance and to reach a superior or even an advanced level of linguistic performance, many objectives must be mastered. One way to achieve these goals faster is by keeping a *journal*.

What is this journal?

In my classes, the *journal* is a personalized work in progress document as well as a self-assessment of one's own language performance. It is usually composed of two sections:

a) a personalized dictionary where students include new vocabulary, expressions, corrections, grammar rules, pronunciation examples or any important features relevant to the language;

b) personal reflections on their goals / objectives (why they are taking the course), strengths (how they perform at their best in the language), weaknesses (the difficulties they may be experiencing learning the language), strategies (ways to improve their performance) and any comments they may have regarding their acquisition of the French language.

The *journal* can contain both positive and negative comments. It can include any problems encountered as well as other aspects of the learning process. These could pertain to material taught or even to such things as their interaction with other classmates.

Some student reflections:

"By using the *journal*, I was able to look at my errors. I have so many!"
"Since I want to be a journalist, I would like to be able to write in French."
"I didn't have any difficulty in doing exercise X because it was easy and the text was interesting."
"I didn't understand the oral exercises because the people were talking too fast. The cassette recording was not clear."
"I try to watch one TV program a week and I often use the dictionary."
"I really like the idea of this *journal* because if I have a question, I can look in my notes."
"I think I will use this *journal* next year. I will keep on writing my own notes."
"I still have a lot of work to do to improve my French."
"It was sometimes difficult to find time to write in my *journal*. I had to be disciplined but I think it was worth it."
"I use the *journal* when I study for my tests. It helps me remember what we did in class."
"It helped me reflect on my French; I have learned new words and how to express my ideas."

Personal remarks:

a) A *journal* is usually worth 5% of the final mark. Over the Fall session, the students chose the assignment due date. After grading the *journal's* content (not the form), the students had the opportunity to redo and hopefully improve their final mark. Some did.

b) Many students write about their views on campus life or their future aspirations. After telling students to write simply for the sake of writing, one wrote more than eight pages about her personal life. In a writing course, this type of participation would be encouraged!

c) In some cases, students complete (or start) the *journal* just before its due date. They know their work is substandard and in most cases, the lack of effort shown in completing the *journal* assigned is reflected in the final mark they receive on the entire course.

d) In other cases, students who are struggling in the course can present a *journal* where they express these difficulties, their motivation and their interest in the language. In this instance, the *journal* helps them improve their performance and both the instructor and student are pleased!