

Learning and Teaching Development Committee Calendar of Events — March - April 2008

IATHE

The Institute of the Advancement of Teaching in Higher Education begins its next course, online, on March 7, 2008. If anyone is interested in signing up for this course (it is still in its first week), please contact the Director of Teaching and Learning (rgmoore@stu.ca). Remember that the Learning and Teaching Development Committee will pay the fees for this twelve week course.

ISW

The Instructional Skills Workshop was scheduled for April 23-26, 2008. However, this is a very intense 3 (eight hours a day) or 4 (6 hours a day) day workshop. I have spoken with the organizers and facilitators and we do not believe it can successfully be held during our extended term while marking, exams, and in some cases classes, are still continuing. We will therefore schedule the ISW for later in the year, probably towards the end of August, 2008.

DUT

If you are interested in taking the Diploma of University teaching at the University of New Brunswick in the Fall of 2008, please think early of signing up for it as places are scarce and go remarkably quickly. Remember that there are three sessions annually -- (1) a year long session (September – April); (2) a fall term session (September to December); and (3) a winter term session (January to April). Details are available from the UNB Centre for Enhanced Teaching and Learning. They are also posted on the LTD Committee website.

ETI

We are scheduled to hold the Effective Teaching Institute at St. Thomas University this spring. We are currently, and tentatively, looking at Saturday, 12 April, 2008, for this event. This is still during the extended school year, but since it is on a weekend (Saturday) there should be fewer conflicting engagements. We, the LTD Committee, will confirm this date as soon as it is feasible to do so.

Other Conferences on Teaching and Learning

The LTD Committee believes that it is essential to disseminate knowledge of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). We are therefore committed to giving financial assistance to faculty members who are interested in travelling to, and presenting at, conferences like STLHE (Windsor, June, 2008), Dalhousie (Halifax, April, 2008), and the AAU Teaching Showcase (October, 2008). Please plan your conference travel early and submit your travel budgets to the LTD Committee as soon as you are able to do so.

SGIDS

Small Group Instructional Development Sessions: these can be scheduled for your classes at any time. Just make an informal request to the Director of Teaching and Learning or to any other member of the LTD Committee.

ICTO

In Class Teaching Observation: this can take place at any time. Again, just contact the Director of Teaching and Learning (or any other member of the LTD Committee) if you would like to have an observer present in your classroom.

Individual Appointments

The Director of Teaching and Learning is available for individual appointments to offer advice and encouragement at any time. Faculty members are invited to e-mail the Director and to set up appointments.

Nota Bene:

All in class development sessions, observations, and individual appointments, observations and comments are confidential. You may ask for a written or an oral assessment. The assessment then goes to you, as teacher, and to nobody else. I repeat: it is a question of confidentiality. Website: Remember, too, that a regularly updated list of events is available, courtesy of Dr. James Whitehead, on the LTD web site <http://w3.stu.ca/stu/sites/ltd/index.aspx>



Roger Moore



Sharon Murray



Monika Stelzl



James Whitehead



Dan Murphy



Mark Henick



Teaching Perspectives

St. Thomas University

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Promoting Effective Learning and Teaching Strategies

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Teaching Perspectives

This ninth issue of Teaching Perspectives is the first issue to carry an ISSN and to be officially registered with the National Library of Canada. It is also the first to be dedicated to the teaching philosophies of selected professors at St. Thomas University. Some of the reasons for choosing to highlight teaching philosophies, in this issue, are that the Learning and Teaching Development Committee is very interested in (a) sharing with the St. Thomas University community the thoughts on teaching which are developed by our professors; (b) exemplifying the teaching philosophies of our professors so that others may emulate them; (c) offering comparators with other national award winning professors from the region (Roger Moore, Kate Frego) and from Ontario (Barry Joe); and (d) establishing the teaching philosophy as a lead in to a series of themes which can then be developed in later issues of Teaching Perspectives. These continuing themes will include (a) more teaching philosophies; (b) teaching strategies (linked to the teaching philosophies); (c) course outlines (linked to teaching philosophies and teaching strategies); (d) evaluation and assessment of student work (types and styles of examination, evaluation, and assessment); (e) ways of obtaining ongoing in-class feedback from students. As a result of this series of articles, regular readers of, and contributors to, Teaching Perspectives will then have, at their finger tips, a series of articles and discussions that will focus on the writing and composition of the teaching portfolio. Hopefully, this discussion will contribute to a better understanding of what goes into different thoughts on teaching as illustrated in different teaching portfolios. This ninth issue of Teaching Perspectives, then, is dedicated to the teachers who teach and to the learners who learn.

TP9, begins with a Guest Editorial in which Dr. Sonsoles Sánchez-Reyes, of the University of Salamanca, Avila Campus, describes how education in Europe has become, and continues to become, more and more student-orientated. Students across Europe, according to Dr. Sánchez-Reyes are being taught how best to access, interpret, and manage an ever-growing quantity of material. Content is being taught less and less as means of access, storage, interpretation, and analysis are becoming more and more complicated and important. It continues with a reflection by Arshad Ahmad, 1992 3M Teaching Fellow & 3M Program Coordinator Concordia University, on the meta criteria which accompany the selection process for the 3M Teaching Fellowships.

TP9 then offers 12 examples of teaching philosophies, and one reflection on the nature of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), all arranged in alphabetical order. In his teaching philosophy, Brad Cross (History) underlines the importance of experiential and transformational learning, often undertaken in collaboration with another professor. Michael Dawson (History) shows how research and teaching go hand in hand. Further, he demonstrates how topics and subject matter can be changed to adapt to the individual needs of individual students in specific locations. A comparison of these two teaching philosophies shows how much teaching can differ, even in one department.

Kim Fenwick (Psychology), winner of the Teaching Excellence Award, here at St. Thomas University (2006), places emphasis upon the need to forge links between students and teacher. She does this with personal anecdotes, some “self-deprecating humour, used in moderation” to make herself less threatening and more approachable. Kate Frego (Biology, UNBSJ), a 3M National Teaching Fellow (2008) speaks of her role as a gardener, nurturing students, as if they were individual plants. She is not, she insists, a farmer, interested in mass production of a single product. Eileen Herteis, Director of the Purdy Crawford Teaching Centre at Mount Allison University, underlines the academic standards and processes necessary to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).

David Ingham (English and Drama), draws on his background as a professional actor and seeks always for students to improve in the basic acts of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, so key to the development of language, not to mention communication and understanding. Barry Joe (Information Technology and German, Brock University), a 3M National Teaching Fellow (2000), writes of the “ideal university environment” in which he practices “what is essentially a 21st-century version of the Socratic dialogue, supported by the new electronic technologies, well augmented with both active learning and Jack Mezirow’s transformative learning theory.” The idea of the learning and teaching community is also emphasized by Martin Kutnowski, Music & Fine Arts, who embraces “the moment of teaching and learning as a magical moment, a meeting of the minds, an instant potentially leading to transcendent intellectual discovery.”

Teaching Philosophy

Rodger I. Wilkie, Aquinas and Great Ideas Programmes, St. Thomas University

My teaching philosophy, developed from ongoing reflection on my pedagogical practice dating back to 1992, consists of a few simple beliefs. First is my belief in the importance of the rapport between teacher and student—a rapport that must be based upon mutual respect. The teacher should respect the students’ needs, interests, intellects, and opinions. The students, on the other hand, should respect the teacher’s knowledge and character. To earn the latter part of this respect, the teacher should display at all times, in class and out, a character worthy of it. Aside from being respectable, a teacher should also be accessible. He or she should encourage questions during class and be available for consultation outside of class, during office hours that are both posted and kept, and during individually scheduled meetings should the need or desire for such arise.

As for the conducting of a class, my beliefs are equally simple. A teacher should come to class prepared and expect the students to do the same. Similarly, a teacher should behave courteously toward his or her students and should expect no less of them in return. While a certain amount of class time must be given over to lecturing, students should also be given ample opportunity for questions and discussion. During discussion periods, the teacher’s chief roles should be to allow the students to develop and explore their own ideas, and to encourage them to interrogate those ideas rationally, through a fair-minded assessment of both their own positions and those of their classmates and instructors. These skills are necessary both to the intellectual well-being of my students and to the proper functioning of a democracy, and my role as an educator obliges me to cultivate them to the best of my ability.

Research is also an important component of teaching. I refer here both to research undertaken in preparation for a particular course, i.e. that which contributes to the immediate community of the classroom, and to research undertaken in the instructor’s area(s) of specialization and intended for an audience of professional peers, i.e. that which contributes to the broader scholarly community. The first of these categories is a minimal requirement for adequate teaching as without it the instructor, even, or perhaps especially, when teaching very familiar material, runs the risk of becoming stale over a relatively few years. Delving into some unfamiliar scholarship every time a particular unit is taught, however, keeps the instructor not only up to date but also actively involved in the learning process and thus, ideally, closely attuned to his or her students’ own educational situations and experiences. The second category of research, that intended for the scholarly community at large, also has a role to play in teaching. It is in this type of research that the scholar engages in the subtlest thought and goes into the greatest depth, resulting, ideally, both in valuable insights that can be incorporated into his or her classroom repertoire and in habits of mind that can serve as models of good studentship. In other words, these two categories of research contribute to greater pedagogical breadth and depth than would otherwise be likely.

In short, then, my beliefs about teaching centre upon the ideals of respect, openness, expertise, and professionalism. It is from teachers who have exemplified these ideals that I have received my most effective and inspiring instruction, and it is by living up to these ideals myself that I hope to play a worthy role in the education of others.



Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Jean Sauvageau, Criminology, St. Thomas University

General Principles & Goals

Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime. (Confucius)

I strive to apply the basic principle enunciated 2500 years ago by Chinese philosopher Confucius (551 BC - 479 BC). I stress work methodology and structure opposed to just teaching facts. Facts are bound to change and become irrelevant. If students know where to get the facts and how to interpret them, they will be able to adapt to any situation.

I endeavour to introduce the students to a broad spectrum of ideas when covering a topic, making sure that the main points of contention and conflict on the issues are presented and explained. I also believe it necessary to give sufficient historical background in order to locate the issues in their proper developmental context. I do not expect students to adopt my personal standpoint on an issue in order to do well in the course. I am willing to let students explore their own ideas while I do expect them to be reflexive and systematic about those ideas.

In my dealings with groups and individual students I stress the need to respect the other. I try to accommodate individual student's expectations as long as they are reasonable. When I cannot meet those expectations, I explain the reasons why.

My goal is to provide students with intellectual tools and methods to engage the ideas and opinions of others, as well as their own, critically, recognizing that doubt is an essential criterium of sound science and critical thinking.

Teaching Style

When I began teaching, I would spend most of the time in class lecturing about the various topics. I have come to realize that students often prefer, and certainly need, more hands-on kinds of work in order to grasp the abstract concepts used in social sciences.

One of the major difficulties I see students encounter, even in their senior years, is their struggle to understand what scientific publications are about, what they are meant to tell the reader and how to evaluate their pertinence and accuracy. I have therefore conceived various lectures and reading grids in the form of check-lists which I use in assignments (such as annotated bibliographies, in-class discussions and research papers) to ensure that students can identify and follow the epistemological, theoretical, methodological and technical properties of the texts. The other obvious difficulty experienced by the students is their struggle with writing. In order to address it, I devise much shorter types of written assignments where the stress is on quality as opposed to quantity. I also make use of various add-on resources such as the STU Writing Centre and an instructor specialized in teaching writing skills.

I take advantage of the multi-media classrooms by using a presentation computer software. Animated lecture material is thus presented on a large screen. I believe this has the advantage of presenting the lecture material in a more organized way for the students with the animation on the screen making things significantly more dynamic. While I do not believe that colourful, animated class notes constitute good pedagogy on their own, the present generation of university students have come in contact with the world through highly visual media such as television, film, music videos and video games. One can see where the challenge lies when it comes to keeping the students' attention in class for 80 minutes at a time. If I am willing to meet the students half way on that account, I also stress the fact to them that nothing will ever replace reading long, imageless texts and conducting long, painstakingly demanding research for one to acquire true skills and knowledge.

Evaluation Methods

I consider that students in 1000-, 2000- and 3000-level courses should learn through assignments that encompass the steps required to write a research paper, such as analytical reading and note taking of scholarly sources, annotated bibliographies, basic theoretical assignments and research proposals; these are combined with more fact-based exams comprising long answer, short answer and multiple-choice questions. I think that the combination of in-class exams and written, take-home assignments test a wide range of knowledge and skills. I do make a point of ending all my courses with written take-home assignment as opposed to a final, sit-down exam. I wish the students to be able to demonstrate their research, writing and reflexive skills given that these are the actual skills they came to acquire in university. In that same spirit, when it comes to 4000-level courses, I assign written, take-home work only.

The editor, Roger Moore, a 3M National Teaching Fellow (2000), offers the teaching philosophy which was submitted for the Atlantic Association of Universities Distinguished Teacher Award, which he won in 1997. Dr. Arshad Ahmad, in his article on the meta-criteria states how teaching philosophies and portfolios have improved over the last ten years and it is interesting that several of the St. Thomas University professors profiled here have teaching philosophies which are equal to, or better than, this award winning teaching philosophy.

Mihailo Perunovic (Psychology) is a young teacher who is setting out with many of the goals espoused by established teachers set firmly before him. He feels that one of the most important things a professor can do is to make classes safe for students so that they can freely exchange ideas within a protected space. Jean Sauvageau (Criminology), describes how he stresses "work methodology and structure as opposed to just teaching facts," for, as he puts it, "facts are bound to change and become irrelevant," whereas if students know where to get the facts and how to interpret them, they will be able to adapt to any situation. Finally, Rodger Wilkie (Great Ideas, Aquinas, and English), the first winner of the Part-Time Teaching Excellence Award, here at St. Thomas (2007), writes of his belief in "the importance of the rapport between teacher and student," a rapport, moreover, that must be "based upon mutual respect." He also writes about the research that is necessary "in preparation for a particular course," as well as "research undertaken in the instructor's area(s) of specialization and intended for an audience of professional peers."

Reading the submissions I received, as editor, I felt most humble to be in the presence of people whose desire to teach and whose commitment to research and teaching are as clear as is demonstrated here. We are indeed fortunate to be able to count upon the incredibly organized and talented teachers, full-time and part-time, tenured and untenured, examples of whose philosophies and, indeed, lives, appear in the following pages. Each of these selected teaching philosophies is grounded not just in theory but in the reality of the classroom; and each one demonstrates very clearly just how dedicated faculty at St. Thomas University are to making their students the true centre of their classrooms, their teaching, and in many cases, of their research as well. They also offer a variety of ways (or Teaching Perspectives) in which this student-centred learning and teaching is made possible.

Student centred teaching and learning is important, especially when it is examined in contrast with other methods, for example content centred or instructor centred teaching.¹ It is also important not just as a theory, a buzz word or a cliché, but as an incredibly vital part of what professors, especially St. Thomas University professors, actually do when they teach. Like it or not, most professors are dedicated professionals in two separate areas: (1) in their specialist subjects in which they continue to do academic research and (2) in the communication of that research (and the wider outreach of it) to the students who come to class to gain expertise in those subjects. Quite simply, teaching (professors) and learning (students) are two sides of a coin and the coin is not complete unless both sides are present in a healthy relationship constructed usually, within the class room, by both parties. Indeed, there are many who would argue that the academy itself consists **only** of two parties, the teachers and the taught, for, as a friend wrote me recently from Ávila "tú seguirás siendo profesor aunque desaparezcan todas las escuelas del mundo" / "You will continue to be a teacher, even if all the schools in the world disappear."

Call for articles: The next issue (Number 10) of Teaching Perspectives will continue with the theme of linking student centred teaching and learning by associating teaching philosophies with actual teaching strategies. Faculty are cordially invited to submit their teaching philosophies and / or their teaching strategies to the editor of Teaching Perspectives (rgmoore@stu.ca) or to a member of the Learning and Teaching Development Committee.

Editorial Policy: The opinions expressed in these articles are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily represent the views of St. Thomas University, the members of the LTD Committee, nor the Editor of Teaching Perspectives.

For a study of student centred teaching in contrast to content centred or instructor centred teaching, please access the following websites: <http://texascollaborative.org/stdcenteredteach.htm> or http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/step/ep301/Fall2000/Tochonites/stu_cen.html or http://www.aishe.org/readings/2005-1/oneill-mcmahon-Tues_19th_Oct_SCL.html ; these are just three of the 120,000 online articles that appear when student centred teaching and learning is googled!

Guest Editorial

European Space of Higher Education, or The Great Shift in the European Philosophy of Teaching

Sonsoles Sánchez-Reyes, Ph.D., Universidad de Salamanca, Avila Campus – Spain

In June 1999, Ministers of 29 European countries (members of the European Union and some associated nations in continental Europe) held a decisive meeting in Italy with the purpose of signing the so-called Declaration of Bologna, a document that was meant to establish the concept of higher education in Europe in the 21st Century. Their confessed objective was to create a common system of university degrees to allow mobility in the European context to undergraduate and graduate students alike, and so contribute to make the cohesion of the European Union a reality. The achievement of this aim involved a drastic change in the philosophy of teaching that had inspired tertiary education traditionally in many of those countries, since the set of methodological principles that were accepted as guidelines for the common degrees could not be easily reconciled with those currently applied in many European teaching settings. That was the case in Spain.

The major change in the didactic paradigm was to shift the focus from the teacher to the learner, adopting a learner centered approach. In Spanish universities, the credits allocated to subjects had always corresponded directly to hours of lessons, in the proportion of 10 hours per credit, an objective measure that nevertheless did not guarantee that students had really attended those class hours, as attendance was considered a right and not a duty of students. Meanwhile, in the European Credit Transfer System an ECTS credit corresponds to some 30 hours of effort on the part of the student, including individual work beyond mere class attendance. If traditionally the mission of teachers was the transfer of knowledge to students, like a jug pouring water into a glass, the European Space of Higher Education pays more attention to the acquisition of learning tools that allow the student to become a lifelong learner, and therefore the teacher has to guide students in their autonomous learning process and be prepared to provide for different learning styles. A lockstep, whole group system of frontal teaching gave way to team work, seminars, research, debates and forums for discussion in smaller groups. The teacher is not the only assessor, as peer and self evaluation are highlighted as well. Obviously all this meant much more work for both teachers and students, and so encountered an unfeigned lack of enthusiasm in some members of these collectives.

The European Space enhances the quality and evaluation of the system, which must be operative in all signing countries by 2010. The decade that separates the birth of the Declaration of Bologna with the effective implementation of its resulting document has been full of tentative schedules and plans of work, and universities and professors have received instruction to prepare for the date ahead. However, it will be necessary for education authorities to provide universities with the appropriate funding to put into practice this more demanding system. And this is something that has not yet occurred.

Teaching Philosophy

Mihailo Perunovic, Psychology, St. Thomas University

Because I am so early in my teaching career, I feel it is somewhat awkward to write about my philosophy of teaching when I recognize that I have so much more to learn about being an effective teacher. However, my experiences at the University of Waterloo as a teaching assistant, tutorial leader, and instructor, as well as at Wilfrid Laurier University as an instructor, and here at St. Thomas University as an assistant professor have given me some experience to base my philosophy on.

To be an effective teacher, I feel one of the most important things a professor can do is to create a classroom atmosphere that promotes learning. This means creating an atmosphere that allows students to feel free to ask questions and debate ideas. To achieve this, I make a special effort to make my students feel comfortable in class. I do this by not only encouraging them to ask questions and to share their thoughts, but by always treating my students with respect and dignity. Furthermore, so that I do not appear at all intimidating to my students (which would only discourage them from actively participating/learning in class), when I give examples to explain certain concepts or ideas, I often use examples that have come from my own experiences. When students see me as a real person, with hobbies and even eccentricities, I feel this can also lead them to feel quite comfortable participating in class.

I also feel that it is essential for me to show the passion I have for what I teach. Emotions can be contagious. If I show great enthusiasm for the material, and truly look forward to each class, this makes it much more likely that the students will come to class eager to learn. Why should students have any interest in something the professor does not seem interested in? Fortunately, this part is quite easy for me; after all, it was my passion for psychology that led me to expend the time and great effort necessary to obtain my PhD.

Another strategy I employ in my classes is to present material using different approaches. This means supplementing my lectures with pictures, diagrams, videos, and even class exercises. This allows students with different learning styles and preferences to benefit from my classes. Furthermore, where appropriate, I will even have students complete personality questionnaires (anonymously) so that they can better understand themselves. I feel many students take psychology courses because they want to better understand themselves and others. Providing them with appropriate feedback about themselves, helps to make the information they learn in class more meaningful to them. When students can relate to the material covered in class in some way they are more likely to remember it. Furthermore, another way to make information more meaningful to students is to use examples from real life. This can include analyzing the personality of celebrities or by applying psychological concepts to things that have recently been in the news. Finally, one must not discount the effectiveness of using humour while teaching. Humour keeps students attentive, which increases the likelihood that they will remember what is presented in class.

Providing students with appropriate feedback is another strategy I employ to teach effectively. Without feedback, students cannot learn. Feedback should not only tell students what they are doing wrong, but it should also tell students what they are doing right. Thus, not only do I comment on the shortcomings in students' papers, but I make an equal effort to point out the things students do well. Furthermore, on tests that employ a multiple choice format, I always make sure I do not simply post the students' grades, but rather hand the tests back in class so that we can go over the questions and answers together. That way students see where they went wrong, what the right answers are (and why), and they also have ample opportunity to ask questions, all of which, I feel, helps them learn.

Finally, at the beginning of my teaching philosophy I mentioned that because I am still early in my teaching career, I recognize that I still have much to learn about being an effective teacher. Because I want to improve as a teacher, I have made it a point to gain feedback about my teaching however I can. This includes talking to students, using midterm evaluations, talking to and getting a lot of advice from my more experienced colleagues, and watching other professors teach. I am also constantly evaluating my teaching after each class and even during class. As I am lecturing, I often make notes on how the lecture is going; what things I explained well, what examples made sense to the students, and what parts of my lecture need work. After class, I often review my performance and devise strategies to improve the quality of my teaching. Furthermore, despite having the hectic schedule of a first year professor, this past semester I made time to attend my first two teaching conferences and found them to be quite enlightening and informative. I certainly look forward to attending more of these in the future, as they provide an excellent forum to learn about different teaching styles and techniques and to talk to great teachers from around the continent.

In summary, I truly enjoy teaching psychology. In order to teach effectively, I try to promote a comfortable, safe environment for students to learn in while showing my enthusiasm for psychology. I also present course material using different formats so that students with different learning styles can equally benefit from my classes. I feel that providing appropriate feedback to students is also an essential part of their education. Finally, I recognize the importance of maintaining and improving my teaching skills. I feel that it is these qualities that have enabled me to consistently receive high evaluations from my students, despite only being at the start of my teaching career.

Philosophy of Teaching 1997

Roger Moore, 3M Teaching Fellow 2000, Director of Teaching and Learning,
St. Thomas University

My philosophy of teaching comes from very diverse sources. At the University of Toronto, I was fortunate to have Dr. Keith Ellis, FRSC, as my mentor in Spanish. It was Dr. Ellis's task to observe my teaching and to help develop my classroom presentations. I owe a great deal to the excellence of his early guidance and, following his advice, I always try to recognize new ideas that will assist me in delivering skills and knowledge. Dr. Ellis also taught me not to teach in isolation; as a result, my teaching skills have been drawn from many aspects of my life. I will give some examples.

ACTIVITY, ENJOYMENT, PURPOSE: for 16 years, from 1976 to 1992 I was a qualified Coach and Instructor in the National Coaching Certification Program (Levels I & II: Rugby). At national level clinics and workshops, I was instructed by some of the best coaches in Canada; these coaches were also outstanding teachers and I soon learned to apply good coaching / teaching techniques and interpersonal skills to in-class teaching. Essential to a good training session, for example, are the Level I training principles: **ACTIVITY, ENJOYMENT, PURPOSE.** As a teacher I try to focus each classroom session around these three basic principles.

CREATIVITY: In similar fashion, I have been able to apply creative writing techniques to Foreign Language Teaching both in Canada (live theatre and creative writing in Spanish) and more recently in Mexico (faculty seminars and practical sessions on live theatre [1995] and creative writing [1996] in English and Spanish). But Creativity goes beyond writing; for me, the university classroom is a place where individuals can both find themselves and (re)create themselves. Creativity, then, is one of the most important aspects of my teaching.

IF THERE'S NO FUN, THERE'S NO FUTURE: This quote comes from one of the English RFU Training Manuals. I always try to include an element of fun, no matter how serious the subject I am teaching. Further, I have always tried to put back into each classroom the joy that I discovered while learning. It is only when students pursue knowledge for love, rather than for material reward, that true life-long learning takes place.

As a teacher, I teach what my students need, when they need it. As a result, in order to respond to student needs and also to maintain the Spanish program here at St. Thomas University, I teach unpaid voluntary overload most years. This gave me a teaching load of 15 hours per week throughout 1995-1996, while in the academic year 1996-1997, I taught 15 hours per week in the first term and 12 hours per week in the second semester. In addition, I maintain an open door philosophy and I encourage students to visit my office when they need help. Clearly, I live, breathe, eat, and sleep my subject. I have always done so. I will probably continue to do so until the day I draw my last breath!

In the first year of university Spanish, I maintain a relatively open classroom, facilitating group work, visiting each student individually, and encouraging the students to explore Spanish for themselves. There is an Hispanic world beyond the classroom and I want the students to visit that world, be it by slides, music, e-mail, WWW, video, or for the financially blessed, travel. The result of this is that many of my students develop, as I did, a life-long commitment to their love of Spanish language and culture, many of them travelling to, or working in, Spanish-speaking countries.

At the upper level, translation and grammar are offered in daily readings of the Spanish news via the WWW. This is clearly a recent development; as are the multi-media presentations on which I am currently working. Literature courses are designed to show students of the next millennium how the privacy of the relatively unfamiliar written text becomes the open viewing of the more familiar public video. We analyse scenes, discover what is missing, show how the viewer is manipulated and, in the active theatre courses, we write our own Spanish plays in an attempt to manipulate and subvert our own live audiences!

Outside the Spanish Program, I have participated in various interdisciplinary areas, offering sections in the Writing Program, the Aquinas Program and Humanities. Throughout these courses, my goals as a teacher are simple: I try to know the individual, to work with the individual, and to prepare the individual so that he or she may make the most of themselves and of their contact time with me. Further, when I teach, I try to leave the student with more than just a knowledge of the subject I am teaching, for I would like to leave each one with a lasting impression of the nature and importance of language and culture. What are culture and language, how do they function, what role do they play in our world, how do they shape our daily lives, what can an improved knowledge of language and culture do to better our existence and make the world a kinder place in which to live? Clearly, Discourse Analysis plays an increasingly important role in this style of teaching.

Language and culture, art and life: for me, teaching goes beyond mere subject and embarks on the much broader issues of truth and beauty. Art, Culture and Literature are key: I try to open the world of books for those who study with me. Cervantes, Tirso de Molina, José Zorrilla -- even if the names of the Spanish authors are unknown, the names of the characters they have created are familiar: Don Quixote de la Mancha, Don Juan, Sancho Panza. These are the people who inhabit the classroom with us in the upper levels of Spanish. Art is also important: I try and open the world of art so that students may appreciate with their own eyes, the skills of El Greco, Velásquez, Goya, Picasso, and the anonymous cave painters who lived in Altamira 7,000 years ago. Often, my slides are accompanied by readings from my own creative work, art and life joining hands in each seminar or class.

But in my philosophy of teaching, the great classics of the Western World, important as they are, are not the only things that count. My recent exchange visits to universities in the Dominican Republic and Mexico have shown me there is a whole world of culture on this side of the Atlantic that we need to bring to our students; for example, the Pre-Hispanic Mexican Códices (Zouche-Nuttall, Vindobonensis, Borgia, Selden), the wonderful Oaxacan palaces at Monte Albán, Mitla, Dainzú, San José Mogote, Suchilquitongo, Lambityeco, and Yagul, and the vibrant poetry of Octavio Paz.

"If I can reach out and touch just one person..." wrote the Spanish Philosopher Miguel de Unamuno, Rector of the University of Salamanca and Professor of Classics. For many years, I based my teaching philosophy upon that sentiment. Now, as I look back on a quarter of a century of teaching at St. Thomas University, I realize with a joy coupled with humility, that one by one, I have reached out and touched the lives of many, many people, and, in return, they too have reached out and enriched my world.

Interesting Times for Teaching & Learning & Some Reflectons about Teaching Philosophies and Dossiers of Award Winning Teachers

Arshad Ahmad, 1992 3M Teaching Fellow & Program Coordinator, Concordia University, Montreal

Interesting Times for Teaching & Learning

It seems that there are good things happening on the teaching front. Across Canada, teaching appears to gain its stature as a scholarly activity. The evidence is compelling. There is more funding dedicated to discovery and action research into teaching (eg. Tri Council, SSHRC, etc). There are more curriculum renewal initiatives usually tied to assessment and accreditation frameworks; more teaching-technology projects; more teaching & learning workshops and conferences; more faculty involvement; more programs for TA's and graduate students. And there is a proliferation of teaching awards.

While I can only cite anecdotal evidence in describing this brave new world in teaching and learning, I can share with you that many of the "good things" I describe above about teaching are reflected in dossiers that we see from large and small universities - irrespective of discipline, which compete for the 3M National Teaching Fellowships Awards. Since the 3M National Teaching Fellowship Award gives equal weight to both teaching and educational leadership, and because the criteria for each are extensive, the nominator must triangulate many singular pieces of evidence to make the case for the nominee.

The Heart of a Teaching Dossier: Teaching Philosophy

One of the key documents that the 3M Selection Committee looks at is the nominee's Teaching Philosophy Statement. Like other key documents, the Philosophy Statement is contextual. Its strength is derived from other evidence in the dossier that reinforces the philosophy that is espoused. By itself, a Philosophy Statement might be held in high regard and deserve an excellent rating. Fluent reasoning and eloquent quotations from poets and laureates may impress the reader. Powerful analogies and expressive metaphors may inspire the reader. Personal stories and good narrative may move the reader to feel close affinity with the nominee.

However, if the rest of the dossier is not aligned with the Teaching Philosophy Statement, an outstanding Statement will probably diminish an otherwise strong dossier. Viewed in this manner, the Teaching Philosophy Statement provides an opportunity for the nominee to speak directly to its audience in an authentic voice and unify and link all other parts of his/her dossier.

In particular, the Teaching Philosophy Statement must be consistent with the teaching strategies that the nominee identifies as important in enhancing student learning. For example, suppose student-centered learning is emphasized in the Philosophy Statement.

It follows that the instructional design process should show how students are considered in the learning process and why these considerations result in effective learning. This might include the nominee's consideration of the audience (even before the course begins), the selection of appropriate teaching techniques and materials, sequencing course content, using technology effectively, choosing assessment methods that measure intended learning outcomes, etc.

Again, all of the elements should demonstrate how the nominee practices what she/he believes in. Letters from colleagues and students should support whether aspects of the Teaching Philosophy that were considered critical, were indeed reflected in these letters. The same should hold for Student Evaluations of Teaching and Student Comments about the Instructor and their learning experience. Thus, clear examples and pointers to evidence which support that learning occurred, make the important link from philosophy to process to practice.

There are of course some dossiers that do all of this and do it well. They ensure there is internal consistency and reliability between philosophy, strategies and other aspects of the dossier. It would not be surprising therefore that these kinds of dossiers will win awards and competitions and become models for others to emulate. And why not? If dossiers meet the stated criteria and present content which substantiates extraordinary claims of teaching excellence and educational leadership and make these claims consistent with a fine teaching philosophy -- all of this increase its validity and we should be glad that such teachers exist. All of us can learn from good practices and role models.

Digging Deeper & Worrying About Performativity

Suppose one gets the sense that a dossier is construed to appear valid (because it is internally consistent) but there is something formulaic and standardized that leaves you with a sense of discomfort. Some academics describe such dossiers as performative. Here I refer to views that consider how severely teaching and philosophy are impoverished when they are reduced to a few pages in a teaching dossier. Or pedagogical homilies categorized as "Chicken soup for teaching" (See New York Times Bestseller "Chicken Soup for the Teacher's Soul: Stories to Open the Hearts and Rekindle the Spirit of Educators" by J. Canfield & M.V. Hansen). Or, as Robertson Davies put it, "Great things are not taught by blancmange methods."

I am referring to instances when teaching philosophies and dossiers are produced to meet stated criteria of excellence. Those evaluating such dossiers tend to confirm that indeed the dossier is excellent since the criteria are evident! Yet they are left with the feeling that it

was somehow manufactured. For simplicity, I refer to such dossiers as slick and polished, or “performative” and leave the reader to explore the extensive literature of performativity and its ontological effects.

How can a philosophy statement and an entire dossier meet substantive criteria and yet remain hollow? What if a teaching philosophy and the dossier are scrutinized and subsequently edited by experts including past award winners, educational development experts, publicity consultants and nominators who know the art of the narrative? What if institutions are also supporting nominees with such experts and resources that transform an above average philosophy statement and dossier into a proposal that meet criteria for excellence but are contrived in a competitive context? What if I was to suggest that such dossiers exist and are proliferating?

In fact, increasingly, the performative dossier was one of the key concerns of Selection Committee Members for the 3M National Teaching Award. If performative dossiers have the kinds of side effects alluded to the above, the reader might wonder why I begin this article with the claim that good things are happening on the teaching front?

Responding to Challenges with Action

Ironically, I believe that all of this is still a good thing in the world of teaching and learning simply because educators are reflective practitioners who will respond to these challenges and will set the bar higher to scrutinize, analyze and evaluate teaching philosophies and the dossiers they are part of. I experienced such a response from six esteemed colleagues who recently met in Montreal to select the 2008 3M Teaching Award Winners. The Committee members included a mixture of past award winners and educational developers with many years of experience and deep knowledge about teaching dossiers. During our four days of deliberations our challenge was to make explicit and articulate ways in which one can recognize performative aspects of dossiers and secondly to communicate “meta” criteria to the public that would overcome such aspects.

We first acknowledged that on paper the majority of dossiers met the stated criteria since they provided lists of activities that by themselves constituted respectable evidence. For example, a listing of committee work, curriculum work, workshops given, attendances at conferences, papers presented etc., by themselves suggest to most evaluators that the nominee is meeting the stated criteria for educational leadership. However, there is a lot of room to interpret the quality of work done and what impact these activities have on improving student learning.

We did not presume nominators or nominees were in the business of creating illusions nor had the intention to deliberately deceive the selection committee. On the contrary, we recognized that dossiers were simply adhering to criteria that the selection committee had advertised and encouraged! Performativity was creeping in. We needed to parse out the standardized, slick, performative dossiers that listed but did not interpret the lists nor made any mention of impact. We wondered about open ended claims of excellence when there was exaggerated rhetoric but little substance to back it up. We contrasted such claims from dossiers that demonstrated creativity, were authentic, fresh, captivating, pervasive, balanced, versatile and deep - such that the genuine personality of the nominee clearly emerged from the triangulation of documents submitted. We looked for the voice of the nominee – mostly in the teaching philosophy statement.

We did this by generating meta criteria. We brainstormed words and phrases that speak to truly extraordinary teaching dossiers – which elicited in us a sense that the dossier was indeed creative, authentic, fresh, captivating, pervasive, balanced, versatile and deep! We included other words such as rigor, energy, passion, reach, community, transformation, etc., and talked about how evidence becomes unforgettable. (I hope this partial list of words conveys where we were going with our discussion). None of the teaching philosophies had all of these attributes, yet it was during discussion of the evidence, that it became apparent whether one was looking at genuine evidence or evidence that was incomplete, contrived, exaggerated, self serving, etc. In the absence of any explanations about this process, none of this will make much sense to a nominator who tries her/his best to fulfill stated criteria that describe an excellent teaching philosophy or follow prescriptions that make for an outstanding teaching dossier. This is precisely why we feel that the deliberations of the Selection Committee should (and will) be published including meta criteria that will be used in evaluating teaching philosophies and teaching dossiers. In other words, this Committee will do its part to publicize its evaluation process that uses critical judgment and talk about this process in a series of public workshops and conference sessions.

This is why in conclusion I would like to reinforce the opening line of this article – that we are living in interesting times where good things are happening on the teaching front. When I look back at the teaching philosophy statements (and teaching dossiers!) of some of the best teachers in the country in the 1980s and compare these to the evolution of the documentation that is now provided, I cannot help but marvel at how the bar for excellence has been raised. There is no doubt that teaching philosophies and teaching dossiers reflect a richer array of evidence and deeper ways of thinking about student learning.

We are privileged to have come so far in so short a time. Like many of my colleagues, I worry about standardization, recipes and performative aspects in dossiers. I become cautious and sometimes skeptical when a dossier looks too good to be true. Nevertheless, responding to these challenges is exactly why we live in interesting times. Challenges are really opportunities to move forward. We know that Teaching Philosophies are works in progress. We know that teaching expertise is a journey. This journey is far more fulfilling because the process makes learning more interesting than any destination we may have imagined.

sonatas by Brahms. I, with some others, was a beginner, and we were just struggling with small pieces from Schumann Op. 68. The teacher made it an obligation to be present all four hours—twice a week—and learn from every performance/lesson. Our teacher required this time commitment equally from advanced and beginner students, claiming that everybody had something to learn from each piece of music and from the way each person approached the study of each piece.

Indeed, this was a reenactment of the old, mentor-apprentice model, which was prevalent in the artistic workshops of Medieval Europe. I am grateful to have experienced it first hand. My attendance at the piano class at the Conservatory represented the most explosive period of my growth as a musician. In addition to learning “my” piano pieces, and perhaps without even being fully aware of it, I became a member in a community of practitioners, sharing my difficulties and successes, and learning from my peers. The teacher was there only as a figure of age and authority, and to provide very small tidbits of advice. The community helped me to shape a new identity, that of a “musician,” which I didn’t have (none of my parents is professionally involved with music). Paraphrasing Peter Senge—another fundamental author in the field of organizational learning—I acquired the “mental models” of a musician, started to feel like one, and started to exercise the discipline that is absolutely necessary to perfect one’s craft, many hours a day, during several years.

What my experience as a piano student tells me is that Wenger’s “situated learning” is an authentic, profound, powerful idea, valid in the “real” world. Indeed, this learning paradigm, which accurately describes formal artistic training, is also the de-facto learning mechanism in post-industrial business corporations. In a modern business corporation, which is seemingly an organization with an even more overtly rigid, pyramidal structure, most learning occurs by horizontal interaction, and not through vertical directives. Notwithstanding the responsibilities towards their immediate supervisors, employees are primarily members within a community of practitioners, all learning from one another. As explained by Peter Senge, belonging to the community provides a strong sense of identity, and the protocols and mannerisms created by the interaction among members shape and re-shape the inner mental models and overall performance of the organization as a whole. In the last few years, the key importance of human resources and the power of horizontal learning has been recognized and harnessed by thousands of organizations worldwide, in every conceivable type of economic activity.

But our teaching-learning environment—including the classroom itself, a sacred space for reflection which is separated from the world outside by the campus walls—is still designed with the lecturing paradigm in mind, one in which the teacher “transmits” knowledge to his or her students. The design of lecturing classrooms goes back to the time when the teacher was an actor, a bridge between the outside world and the students. Lecturing made perfect sense at a time when information was scarce and the world conceived mostly as a static text to be dogmatically explained.

By contrast, the world is now a highly dynamic, hyper-connected, ever-growing system, not explainable by any single individual person, but which must be collectively—and only provisionally—decoded. As soon as they graduate and enter the post-industrial workforce, students join teams entrusted with formulating and solving new, never-encountered-before problems and situations; in other words, they must collectively create new knowledge. At the very least, then, the kind of learning modalities described by Wenger need to be constantly reinvented to make them applicable in the traditional university classroom.

Keeping in mind the inherent tension between these two contrasting pedagogical paradigms, I strive to achieve a balance which serves the ultimate purposes of teaching and learning: to develop capacity for action—in the context of music appreciation and music making, capacity for action can be defined as the capacity to perceive, discern, apprehend, decide about, emotionally-intellectually respond to, and manipulate music. My own personal pedagogic formula, always a provisional work in progress, comprises a flexible mix between traditional didactic instruments (lecturing format, structured written assignments, research papers, mid-term and final exams) and, inasmuch as possible, collaborative class dynamics (shared assignments, collaborative low-stake writing, open debate, shared reflections, collective performance). Whenever I can, I resist the temptation to just lecture in my classes, using instead learner-centered strategies while creating frequent opportunities for horizontal interaction.

In the end, I think of the teaching-learning situation of music as a rare intersection between science and art, a communal space which allows me to share my lifelong love for music and where, any given day, I or the other participants may experience profound intellectual epiphanies and/or life-changing emotional revelations.

