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The Practices of Teaching

Instructor

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Preface

Teaching demands recognizing that students and teaching subjects can neither be known altogether, nor once and for all. The more teachers think about their subjects, the less they are sure of their ground, becoming clearer about the limits of their understanding and coming to share in the "learned uncertainty" of scholars. The more they contemplate their students, the more they will become aware of the fact that their knowledge of them is imperfect and constructed, a fallible vision also because people change, and are supposed to change, in school. Still, students and subject matter have to be brought together, on giving understandings: Uncertainty and imperfection are overtaken by the need to act.

Margret Buchmann, *The Careful Vision*

Syllabus

What are the most appropriate and effective ways of teaching in communities of faith? What are the most appropriate and effective ways of teaching religious / theological knowledge in academic settings?

Those questions are central to the course, which is designed for students in theology, religious education and ministry who wish to deepen their theoretical and practical foundations as teachers. The emphasis will be on becoming more deliberate in one's teaching.

Four dimensions of teaching will be explored, with major emphasis on the first:

1. Conceptualizing teaching, drawing in particular on Lee Shulman's model of "pedagogical reasoning and action" and on the work of Jane Vella. Various exercises will be tried in order to engage people in this activity.
2. Exploring the literature on teaching so as to develop one's capacity for analysis and creativity. Participants are expected to select from the annotated bibliography and / or from the bibliographies in the various texts.
3. Practicing a few specific strategies and models of teaching as a way of increasing one's repertoire as a teacher. Course participants may anticipate working in peer groups to practice and evaluate certain "pedagogical moves."

4. Analyzing one's own experience of being taught and teaching, and probing the implications for one's teaching. Thus, participation in this course requires the pursuit of deeper self-knowledge and the willingness to inquire into the implications of one's biography, and thereby engage in developing a spirituality for teaching.

The course is designed on the basis that the participants have (or are in the process of attaining) and substantial background in theological studies; furthermore, it is grounded on the premise that the participants' teaching will center on religious / theological matters.

Neither preparation in educational studies or extensive experience in teaching is presumed, though participants with background and / or experience may thus be capable of more advanced work. *What is essential is the willingness to engage in reflective teaching during the course of the semester.*

Requirements

The course requirements correspond to the four foci:

- **Conceptualizing teaching:** Submission of a design for teaching a particular course or workshop over a limited period (e.g., a week, or two or three days), developing in particular the way one will transform the subject matter for teaching. This will be due at the end of the course, no later than December 11, 1998.
- **Exploring the literature on teaching:** Drawing upon the texts and annotated bibliography for the course in the preparation of one's plan (see above) and in the analysis of one's teaching (see below). Thus, familiarity with selected works on the bibliography should be **evident** in the design and teaching analyses.
- **Practicing a few specific strategies of teaching and analyzing one's practice:** Participating on a regular basis in a teaching group or teaching in a given situation. Each member of the course must teach on at least two occasions and submit an analysis of each teaching experience. This analysis should be a narrative about the thinking that went into planning, a description of what happened in the enactment, and what has been learned through the experience of teaching and reflection.

This requirement may be fulfilled in one of several ways:

1. With a small group of one's peers from this course;
2. If you are a tutor, in a formal tutorial setting if you pair with another tutor on a regular basis.
3. In a field site (this need not be a formal field education setting) where you can pair with another class member.

Those who select options 2 or 3 must ask someone from this course to observe and assess their teaching.

The analysis of the teaching should be in narrative form, following in broad outline the format in appendix 2.

These analyses are due no later than **October 13th** and **November 17th**.

- **Analyzing one's own experience of being taught and teaching:** Writing a "critical incident" one one's learning or teaching. This exercise, due September 29th and used as part of the class session that day, will help us to reflect out of our own experience.

More detail about these requirements will be given during class, and modifications will be made according to need.

A note on deadlines for written materials: These are firm deadlines, and "credit with distinction" will not be given to course participants whose work comes in past the deadlines. Exceptions will be granted only for serious reasons. Should such a serious matter arise, please contact one of the instructors before the due date.

In sum, participation in this course entails:

Regular attendance and participation in the class sessions.

Submission of a "critical incident" by September 29th.

Two teaching experiences, and analysis of each (including reference to pertinent literature), due no later than October 13th and November 17th.

Willingness to respond to another's teaching, either in a peer group or as an observer / partner.

Submission of a design for teaching, due no later than December 1th (including reference to pertinent literature).

The annotated bibliography for the course can be found on the website for the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion (under the link for "Resources"):

<http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu>

Basic Texts

Armstrong, Thomas	<i>Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom</i>
Brookfield, Stephen	<i>The Skillful Teacher</i>
Brookfield, Stephen	<i>Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher (for tutors)</i>
Gross-Davis, Barbara	<i>Tools for Teaching</i>
Garmston, R. & B. Wellman	<i>How To Make Presentations that Teach and Transform</i>
Vella, Jane	<i>Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach</i>
Beauboeuf-Lafontant, T. and D. Smith Augustine	<i>Facing Racism in Education</i>
Penaskovic, Richard	<i>Critical Thinking and the Academic Study of Religion</i>

Other Online Resources

<http://scholar.cc.emory.edu/scripts/AAR/AAR-MENU.html>

<http://nlu.nl.edu/ace/Resources/Documents>

ERIC (Educational Resources Informational Clearinghouse) is an important database. Access it through the ColumbiaNet in the Teachers College Library section.

Evaluation and Grading

Procedures for evaluation and grading will be worked out with members of the class as part of our consideration of evaluation procedures in teaching.

Appendix 1

Planning for "The Design": Fulfilling the Requirement on Conceptualizing Teaching

Your design should cover a modest amount of time so as to provide depth rather than breadth. It should reflect engagement with the readings and discussions of the course, and should include specific ways of teaching (e.g., strategies (especially with regard to questions and discussing techniques) and / or models (advance organize, role play, case models)).

The design should be written in narrative form, with an introduction that situates your design in context in terms of the demands made by the subject matter, the "subjects" (participants) and the political realities. That is, it should be grounded in the heuristic of "pedagogical reasoning and action" without being unduly literalistic in drawing upon Shulman's design. This narrative need not be lengthy, but it should offer enough detail to give an outsider a feel for the situation in which you work or anticipate working in. You may wish to include appendices that illustrate the kinds of resources you will employ.

Let this design be distinctively yours - one that flows out of your own commitments. Let it en flesh your theology and/or educational philosophy, and be a vital contribution to your work in the year to come.

Criteria for grading:

- Clarity in the presentation of context
- Application of some of the specific ways of teaching we have worked with in class
- Connection to the literature, whether from the basic texts or from the bibliography
- Connection with your religious tradition, not simply in the subject matter but in your own expressions of your rationale
- Consistency insofar as you show that the actions you are designing flow from pedagogical reasoning
- Care in presentation, especially in the use of language

Appendix 2

Analysis of Teaching: Some Suggestions

Listed below are a number of questions that you might use to stimulate the development of your analysis. You need feel obliged neither to deal with every question or to these particular inquiries. In terms of style, please use first-person narrative rather than simply answering the questions.

Identify the model you used and what you chose to teach; what is the "fit" between the model and the content?

Summarize your plan, using Vella's seven steps as appropriate.

Give a brief summary of the logic or layout of your teaching according to the phases of the mode.

What was the response of the group? What did they seem best to understand? What difficulties arose?

How did you feel at the completion of the teaching?

In light of further reflection, based on reading and class discussion, what would you retain? do differently?

What are you learning about teaching through doing it?

Your analyses need not be lengthy, but they should reflect careful attentiveness to teaching. You may find it helpful to keep your preparatory notes and also to take notes immediately after you teach; such activities contribute some helpful details.

Insofar as possible, try to write up (at least in draft form) your experience of teaching within a few days as you have done it.

Grading: This is an especially complex factor in a course such as this. We do not wish to *grade* your teaching - lest that add to one's nervousness - but rather the depth of your deliberateness in preparing and analyzing your peer teaching. We will *evaluate* your teaching in oral and written form, but the evaluation of your analyses will include a *grade* for the quality of your ability to be self-analytical about teaching. And, since content and form cannot be separated, your papers should be characterized by meticulous attention to clarity and mechanics.

Practices of Teachings 1998

Listed below are readings that offer significant perspectives on various topics of this course. For a fuller list of resources, consult the various on-line bibliographies.

TOPIC	READINGS
Critical Incidents	Brookfield, <i>The Skillful Teacher</i> , pp. 31-34; cf. his <i>The Critically Reflective Teacher</i> , pp. 147-149 and pp. 114-139 (variant, the "Critical Incident Questionnaire")
Diversity	Armstrong, <i>Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom</i> Brookfield, <i>Skillful Teacher</i> , pp. 57-70 Deyhle, in <i>Facing Racism in Education</i> , pp. 23-69 ("Navajo Youth and Anglo Racism"); also McElory-Johnson, pp. 107-126 ("Giving Voice to the Voiceless") Gross-Davis, <i>Tools for Teaching</i> , pp. 31-59 Penaskovic, <i>Critical Thinking and the Academic Study of Religion</i> , pp. 1019
Teaching Analyses	Ballenger, in <i>Facing Racism in Education</i> , pp. 309-320 ("Because You Like Us")

	Brookfield, <i>The Skillful Teacher</i> , pp. 1-56
Power Issues	Brookfield, <i>The Critically Reflective Teacher</i> . Pp. 92-113 Freire, <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i> Delpit, in <i>Facing Racism in Education</i> , pp. 127-148 ("The Silenced Dialogue") Vella, <i>Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach</i>
Presentation Strategies	Brookfield, <i>Skillful Teacher</i> , pp. 71-87 Garmston and Wellman, <i>How to Make Presentations That Teach and Transform</i> Gross-Davis, <i>Tools for Teaching</i> , pp. 99-145
Discussion Strategies	Brookfield, <i>Skillful Teacher</i> , pp. 88-114 Gross-Davis, <i>Tools for Teaching</i> , pp. 63-98
Collaborative and Experiential Strategies	Brookfield, <i>Skillful Teachers</i> , pp. 115-131 Gross-Davis, <i>Tools for Teaching</i> , pp. 147-165 Penaskovic, <i>Critical Thinking and Academic Study</i> , p. 75-93, 95-115
Planning and design of courses	Vella, <i>Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach</i>

Select a location 

http://www.wlu.ca/~wwaar/syllabi/the_practices_of_teaching-boys.html

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