SoTL Commons Conference

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Three R’s for SoTL: Rigor, Relevance, and Rubrics

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Three R’s for SoTL:
Rigor, Relevance, and Rubrics

Pamela Brown, Communication and Journalism
Janet Cape, Music Education
Tamara Musumeci-Szabó, Psychology
Cynthia Newman, Marketing
Arlene Wilner, English and Baccalaureate Honors

7th Annual SOTL Commons Conference, Savannah, GA
March 26, 2014
Rigor: The “High, Hard Ground”

✓ “Application of knowledge or systematic practice to the instrumental problems of practice”
  (Donald A. Schön 1995)

✓ Depends on “well-structured” problems
  (Herbert Simon 1973)

Example: “What is known about the ways in which students can achieve effective understanding of stereochemistry in introductory organic chemistry instruction?”
  (Brian Coppola)
Relevance: The “Swamp”

Depends on “Ill-Structured Problems”

Examples:

- Why do many students in BIO-117 (Introductory Cell and Molecular Biology) have difficulty making connections from one topic to the next?

- How can I help novice students begin to understand the fundamentals of a range of business fields and recognize inter-relationships among these disciplines?
“[I]n the swamp lie the problems of greatest human concern.”

So: How does one get comfortable in the swamp?
Must one choose high ground or swamp?

Science as *product*, an established body of knowledge. . . . Or

Science as *process* “in which scientists grapple with uncertainties and display arts of inquiry akin to the uncertainties and arts of practice”
Faculty Learning Communities for SoTL

CASTL Model:
- Small-group structure
- Multi-disciplinary
- Top-down and bottom-up
- Require “going public”

BRIDGE www.rider.edu/bridge
Considering how the four different projects have addressed the rigor v. relevance tension, and invoking your understanding of SoTL in general, how might you (begin to) articulate criteria for evaluating classroom research?
Getting the Big Idea: Improving Student Learning in Communication Law

Pamela A. Brown, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
Department of Communication & Journalism
Challenges: How do I…

- Teach complex material to large numbers of average students?
- Break away from traditional approaches to required courses (reliance on thick text books)?
- Shift course emphasis from recall of facts, concepts & details to construction of meaningful, lasting understandings?
- Shift course focus from coverage to focus on critical thinking?
Goals:

- Lead students to think about the legal rights and responsibilities of all communicators
- Provide students with key understandings about rights and responsibilities of professional communicators
- Provide practice in connecting and applying these understandings
- Make content “portable”
Reframing:

- Eliminate standard text books
- Less is More for novices
- Lots of scaffolding:
  - Study Guides and Reading Questions
- Making connections:
  - Big Ideas
  - Template: We know this Big Idea is true because…
  - Integrating historical context, cases, statutes, philosophical and political principles
In your own words, explain what it means to say that in the case of Sidis v. F-R Publishing, 1940, Judge Clark struck a balance “between the freedom of journalism and the right to privacy” (61).
The words “no law” in the First Amendment do not really mean no law; there are lots of legal restrictions to our freedom of speech.

The Constitutional right to privacy is a young right implied by the Fourth Amendment, and it grows and shrinks in response to our expectations.
are required to interact with reading material, not simply restate it

make connections among a variety of concepts and facts by integrating ideas in readings and class notes

reveal their understandings and confusions

construct a meaningful body of knowledge about the law of communication
Conclusions:

- Fewer course repeats
- Higher grades
- Most importantly:
  - Greater understanding
  - Meaningful connections
  - Students learn how to learn complex material
  - Knowledge travels with students
Bridging the Gap: Helping Pre-service Teachers Transition from Theory to Practice

- Dr. Janet E. Cape
- Department of Music Education
- Westminster Choir College of Rider University
Praxis in Secondary Music is a major requirement in the music education program.

Students taking the course have varied degrees of teaching experience:

- Roughly half of the participants have no previous experience teaching children in a K-12 setting.
- The remaining participants have taken Praxis in Elementary Music and taught in an elementary setting.

Students spend the first half of the semester exploring teaching strategies that facilitate performing, creating, and responding to music.
“General music” at the secondary level could describe many different kinds of courses

Students struggle to transfer the skills and strategies we’ve learned in class to the disparate contexts in which they teach.
My primary goal for this BRIDGE project was to identify and pilot strategies that would help inexperienced pre-service teachers to apply the teaching strategies modeled and practiced in the first part of our course to their practicum teaching experiences.
Intervention #1:

“Annotated Portfolio” (Angelo & Cross, 1993)
The goal of this assignment is for you to provide satisfactory evidence of each competency in your online portfolio.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate essential musicianship skills</td>
<td>Video excerpts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan effective and engaging lessons</td>
<td>Written (typed) lesson plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach effective and engaging lessons</td>
<td>Video excerpts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect on your teaching</td>
<td>Written (typed) reflections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Musicianship Skills**

Video excerpts should be no longer than two to three minutes.

1. Capture evidence of your ability to:
   - Make music with students
   - Provide feedback that helps students to develop their musicality
   - Perform written music accurately and expressively during a lesson.
   - Lead group music making with accuracy and use of gestures that promote technical skill and expression.

2. Provide a brief written narrative explaining how the video excerpt(s) serve as evidence of your musicianship.
SECONDARY PRAXIS PORTFOLIO

VIDEOS

LESSON PLANS

REFLECTIONS
Secondary Practicum - Fall 2012

During the Fall 2012 semester, I worked toward completing my Secondary Practicum requirements by observing and teaching a number of classes. Here you will find evidence of my general and choral music classroom experiences.

General Music

- Newtown Middle School - Newtown, PA
Reflection
This morning I did warm ups with the 9th grade boys at Pennsbury High School. I've never had an experience that went less according to plan. I had two warm ups planned with what keys I was going to start in and how I was planning on sequencing it, but when I got in front of the group, I realized I had to change a lot of what I had planned. I realized that in 9th grade, they are almost all still changing voices. Whatever key I started in seemed to be the wrong key. I tried to take my time, however, and not get flustered. I simply stopped and started again where I thought it would be appropriate. I found that I had to modify my melodies either because there were elements not covered in the previous parts of the warm up or it needed to be simplified for these changing voices. The students were receptive though, and readily answered all the questions I asked. In the last part of the sequence, I played a chord and asked them to identify if it was major/minor, then asked them to audiate and sing either do, mi, or so. They got the hang of it and did quite well. It showed me that I can trust students to figure out problems on their own. There were a few strong musicians who had it right from the beginning, and the others followed their lead and found the next pitches. Even though I only had a chance to work with them for a few minutes, I learned so much. I realized I was able to think on my feet, something I felt I couldn't do before. My piano skills are not perfect, but they're improving. I hope that next time I can play more and be even more flexible with changing my plans.

Chorale Warm Up Day 1 Outline
1. Stretch arms up and over each side to lengthen torso.

2. "Around the clock" shoulders (3 o'clock is behind you) - Relax at 4 o'clock

3. Close your eyes. Envision an apple. See the core of the apple and how everything is placed happily around the core of the apple. Envision your spine as the core of your body; it goes directly down the center of your body. Allow your feet to feel firmly planted, but relaxed. Relax your knees and torso. Check that your shoulders are still at 4 o'clock. Allow your head to become a gentle bobble head. Shake your head yes and no. Open eyes.
Intervention #2:

“Teacher-Guided Observation” (Sahakian & Stockton, 1996)
Evaluating the Result:

- Portfolio Grading Rubric
- Cooperating Teacher Feedback
- Formal Student Evaluation
- Informal Class Discussion/Reflection
Lessons Learned:

- Specific portfolio criteria guided participants in applying course strategies to the contexts in which they taught.
- Students exhibited greater flexibility and independence in their lesson planning.
- Guided observations helped participants to notice application of strategies by cooperating teachers and peers and contributed to nuanced self-reflections.
Improving Integrative Thinking & Learning

Cynthia Newman, Ph.D.
College of Business Administration
Marketing Department
Background

- CBA 110 - Introduction to Business
- Learning Goal of Interest

Students will learn to recognize & appreciate the inter-relationships among the functional & supporting areas of business
Project of Interest

- 1 Industry
- 4 Wall Street Journal Articles
- 4 Concept Paragraphs
- 4 Integration Paragraphs

Area of Concern
Challenges from the Literature

- Discovering Patterns & Organizing Facts
- Offer an Assignment-Centered Course
The Intervention

- Developed a Modified Categorizing Grid
## Categorizing Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explicit Article Reference #1</th>
<th>Accounting</th>
<th>Computer/Management Info. Systems</th>
<th>Economics</th>
<th>Finance</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Marketing</th>
<th>Production &amp; Operations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit Article Reference #2</td>
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<td>Implication #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implication #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implication #3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Intervention

- Developed a Modified Categorizing Grid
- 4 Part Practice Assignment
- Use of “Track Changes” in Word
Evaluating Results

- Primary Trait Analysis
  - Practice Paragraphs
  - Final Project Paragraphs
  - “Control Group” Paragraphs
- Project Grades
- Student Evaluation
Lessons Learned

- Learning Goal is Realistic
- Show & Tell v. Practice & Discover
Saving Ferris: Giving Psychology away, one section at time

Tamara J. Musumeci-Szabó, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychology
Welcome to Psychology 100

Psychologist

what government thinks I do  what society thinks I do  what my friends think I do

what my mom thinks I do  what I think I do  what I actually do

Get this and other WhatDo photos at whatidos.com
Challenges…

- Struggle with application-based exams
- Little retention from one exam to the next
- Office hour refrains:
  - “I don’t understand. What am I doing wrong?”
  - “I studied so hard—but I couldn’t decide between A or B…”
- What was the problem?
Solution #1: Use the first day to establish operational definitions

Syllabus = informed consent

How to succeed:
1) Come to class.
   - Physically vs. mentally
2) Read. [Avoid decapitation].
   - Small doses
   - Actively [i.e., translate & apply]
3) Discuss.

CAUTION: this course might make you a better student...
Solution #2: Content Relocation

Typical Order
- History
- Methods
- Biopsychology
- Sensation & Perception

EXAM ONE
- Consciousness
- Learning
- Cognition
- Memory

Revised Order
- History
- Methods
- Biopsychology
- Sensation & Perception

EXAM ONE
- Memory
- Consciousness
- Learning
- Cognition
Writing Assignment #1 Option B: Beating the Princeton Review® (Memory)

Every year test preparation companies such as Kaplan® and the Princeton Review® make millions of dollars by providing books and courses to prepare individuals to take tests like the SAT and the GRE. Imagine you have all the money and resources in the world at your fingertips, using what you have learned from our chapter on memory, develop a course of your own that includes 3 techniques for improving your memory and preparing for an exam. Each technique needs be based upon scientific evidence from the chapter. In a brief paper (no more than 5, double spaced pages), explain how and why your techniques work and what a graduate of your course would expect. Due: 2/14

When I grade WA #1, Option B, in addition to a standard Introduction and Conclusion, this is what I will be looking for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the name of your course?</th>
<th>1 pt</th>
<th>____ of 1 pt</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>What is the technique?</td>
<td>2 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>What does a person using it need to do?</td>
<td>2 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Why does it work? (scientific evidence)</td>
<td>2 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memory Technique #2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the technique?</td>
<td>2 pts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does a person using it need to do?</td>
<td>2 pts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6 pts</td>
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</table>
General Psychology
Extra Credit Assignment #1
Fall 2010

*Worth up to 5 Extra Credit points added to your final course grade*

Take some time to review your progress in your courses this semester. Are you doing as well as you hoped? Are you doing as well as you expected? Could you do better? At this point you have learned several possible ways to improve your learning and memory. Turn to pg. 271 in your textbook. Huffman provides eight (8) evidence based ways to improve your memory. Review these ways and why they work (i.e., Chapter 7).

Select a course in which you would like to improve your performance (our class or any other you are taking this semester.) In no more than five (5) typed pages, describe the course you have selected and your current situation. What kind of course is it? What kinds of assessment are used (e.g., application based exams, recognition, multiple choice, short answer, etc.)? Do you think your current approach is working (Why? Why not?) Select any three (3) of the eight (8) strategies Huffman provides. Describe them and then apply them to your course. Discuss how you would implement them and how you would expect them to help you. Discuss what might stop you from implementing these strategies and how you might eliminate these barriers.
Meet Ferris:
Ferris B. (name omitted to protect his identity) is a first year student at Rider University and he needs your help. He is having a difficult time adjusting to college life after a rough start to his first semester. He started the Fall term with lots of motivation, but after his first round of exams, he’s worried that lots of motivation won’t be enough to help him meet his goals.

As luck would have it, you meet Ferris just after you completed the reading for Chapter 7. After hearing his story, you realize more than anything, Ferris could benefit from a friendly dose of Psychology--Ferris realizes this too and starts asking you questions:

  - Why can’t I make it to my morning class on time?
  - Why do I have trouble on tests even when I studied?
  - Why do I have trouble taking notes during class?
  - Why are exams so hard? [on multiple choice exams he can never eliminate more than 1 or 2 options]
  - Why do I feel like I’m reading/working all the time and has little to show for it?
  - Why does reading take so long?
  - Why can’t I get to sleep at night?
  - Why do I feel like I never have enough time?

Clearly, Ferris has a lot of questions and while you don’t have the time to answer all of them, you can help him based what you have learned from studying Chapter 7.

To be clear, you aren’t going to give Ferris therapy, (for one thing that would be unethical and for another, we haven’t covered that yet). What you can do, though, is teach him about some of relevant concepts from our readings on
Lessons...

- Application is powerful
- Powerful $\neq$ obvious
- Give a gift that fits...

Future directions:

- Reconciling relevance with rigor
- Quasi-experiment(s)
Considering how the four different projects have addressed the rigor v. relevance tension, and invoking your understanding of SoTL in general, how might you (begin to) articulate criteria for evaluating classroom research?
Criteria for Evaluating SoTL
Suggested Primary Traits

- Question-Posing
  - _______, _______, _______, …

- Evidence Selection and Collection
  - _______, _______, _______, …

- Interpretation
  - _______, _______, _______, …

- Implications and Generativity
  - _______, _______, _______, …

- Other?