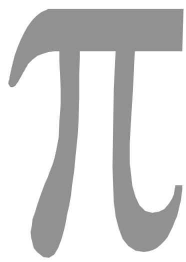

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TEACHING & LEARNING AT MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PURDY CRAWFORD TEACHING CENTRE

A SPECIAL ISSUE ON . . . THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The concept is not new; it is almost 20 years since as "The Scholarship of Teaching" it became part of the lexicon. In 1990, Ernest Boyer, then President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, wrote *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. Boyer argued that we must give "scholarship a richer, more vital meaning" and that it is unreasonable to limit the term scholarship to published research because it excludes so much of the other significant work faculty do. Indeed, he says, scholarship has four overlapping and interdependent parts (xii):

1. The Scholarship of Discovery or Inquiry
The pursuit of knowledge; it is central to academic life, encompassing research and investigation in all disciplines.

2. The Scholarship of Integration
Connects knowledge and discovery into larger patterns and contexts, transcends disciplinary boundaries. Integration includes, for example, cross-disciplinary activities and the connection of technology with teaching or research.

3. The Scholarship of Application or Engagement
Closely related to the concept of service; involves the rigorous application of one's academic expertise to problems that affect individuals, institutions, and society.

4. The Scholarship of Teaching (and Learning)
Involves planning, assessing, and modifying one's teaching; applying to it the same exacting standards of evaluation as those used in research. According to Boyer, the "elusive" Scholarship of Teaching means "transforming and extending" knowledge, not merely transmitting it (24).

Boyer's work has resonated with countless scholars who are eager to raise the profile and value of teaching on their campuses. It is also reflected internationally in university mission statements (including our own), the movement towards certification in university teaching, and the ever-growing interest in teaching portfolios as a way to document and provide evidence of teaching scholarship. *(contd.)*

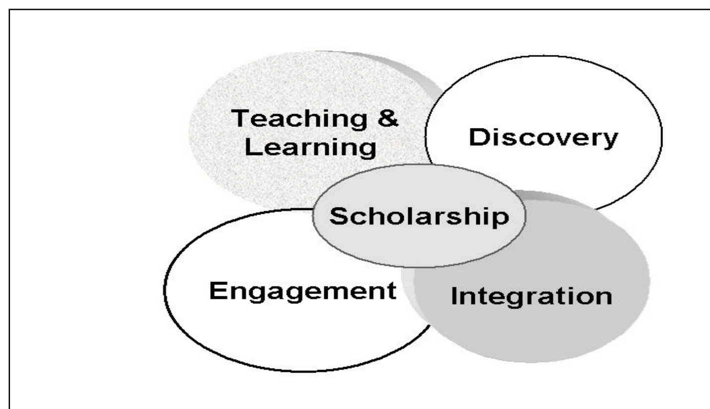

Figure One: Overlapping Scholarships

In recent years, Boyer's Scholarship of Teaching has been renamed the *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, (SoTL). As Mick Healey, a UK National Teaching Fellow, argues, teaching and learning in higher education are "inextricably linked, so the Scholarship of Teaching is as much about learning as it is about teaching" (2000:170). Healey goes on to say that if the aim of teaching "is to make student learning possible," then scholarly teaching should be the means whereby we make the processes to achieve that aim "transparent" (170-171).

Canadian scholar Susan Wilcox has stated that:

> There is a growing interest in fostering the Scholarship of Teaching through educational development programmes that encourage faculty to take an intellectually engaging approach . . . to the improvement of teaching and learning (98).

Yet a swirl of meanings revolves around this term, which remains according to some "elusive and intriguing" (Kreber, 1999) and "evolving" (Healey, 2002). While Healey argues that it may be unrealistic to expect a "single definition to emerge," others, most notably Weimer (1997) and Cerbin (1993), suggest that university teaching is devalued by a number of assumptions and by myths about a lack of rigour and standards. Cerbin says:

> Teaching will not be accepted by the professoriate as authentic scholarship until its advocates offer alternative models of teaching as complex, problematic, intellectually challenging and creative work.

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Begins in the Disciplines

Many teachers embark on SoTL to deal with a particular classroom issue: a new course, the search for innovative ways to teach an old course, the quest for a solution to a dilemma or problem rooted in teaching their discipline. Our disciplines shape our scholarship, in terms of the types of research and inquiry and ways of reporting and recording that are acceptable to and valued by our peers. Such roots increase the likelihood that peers from our discipline might adopt, adapt, or extend our work. As Mary Taylor Huber (2002) explains, disciplines also provide the conceptual framework for the Scholarship of Teaching:

> Disciplinary styles empower the Scholarship of Teaching, not only by giving scholars a ready-made way to imagine and present their work but also by giving shape to the problems they choose and the methods of inquiry they use.

Yet, SoTL is more than simply incorporating one's disciplinary research into teaching (although that can be part of it). Mick Healey has written extensively on the Scholarship of Teaching. Healey, like many, sees that the strength of SoTL lies in its roots within the disciplines, and that teachers should be encouraged "to undertake research into their teaching and the ways in which their students learn (2000:180)" and to "apply the same kinds of thought processes to their teaching as they do their research" (183).

As Lee Shulman, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement for Teaching, points out, teachers in higher education are allied to two professions: their specific discipline and their broader role as educators; as a result, there is both an individual and communal imperative for a Scholarship of Teaching (2000: 50).

To thrive, therefore, practitioners of SoTL must go beyond their "disciplinary dialect" and develop a common vocabulary and methodology that transcend disciplinary boundaries, cut across fields. In her keynote address at a 2002 conference on SoTL, Huber said: "We must make deft use of our own disciplinary styles and take the resulting Scholarship of Teaching and learning into common trading zones."

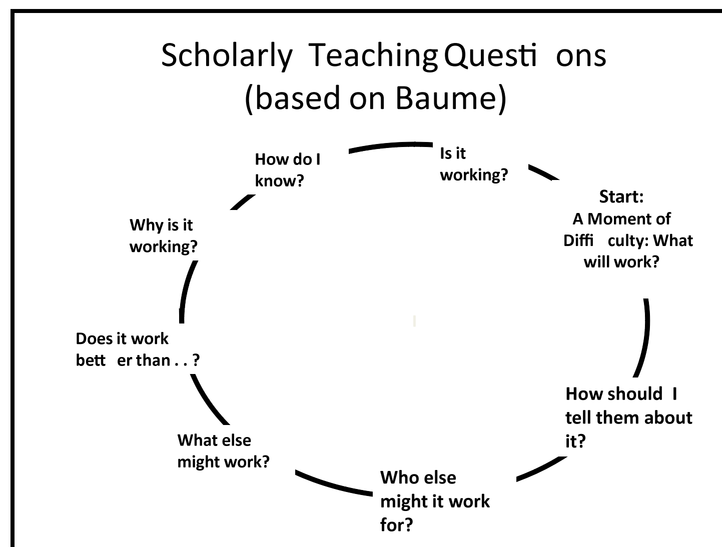

Figure Two: Scholarly Teaching Questions

How Do You DO the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning?

Scholarly teachers consciously reflect on their teaching, asking themselves questions such as these, which David Baume (1996) suggests: "What am I doing? Why? Is it working? How do I know? What theories, principles and values underpin or spring from my practice?" Figure Two shows that by slightly expanding those questions, we may transform reflections that benefit our own teaching into practical publications or presentations that may assist others. *(contd.)*

At the 24th annual conference of the Society for Teaching & Learning in Higher Education (STLHE), I presented a session on *Changing Perceptions of the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning*. During that session, I asked participants to list the kinds of activities in which a scholarly teacher engages. Continuous self-evaluation and the quest to improve were common themes amongst their responses, summarized here:

Scholarly teachers

- Create a teaching portfolio to provide evidence of scholarship
- Are always willing to make changes in their practice
- Participate in programme review and in instructional development opportunities
- Share both successes and disappointments so others will learn from them
- Continuously evaluate their own teaching to check student outcomes
- Systematically collect and are open and responsive to feedback from peers and students

One participant gave the following rich definition: "Scholarly teaching is intentional, studied, prepared, monitored, reviewed, shared, revisited, revised, and revived."

In my presentation, I suggested that the first steps in scholarly teaching are often the result of a particular issue that has arisen in the classroom; for example, teaching a large class for the first time, introducing a new teaching strategy, or dealing with a problem or difficulty.

In response to that teaching issue or topic, scholarly teachers read the pedagogical literature, likely starting with the literature in their own disciplines, such as *Teaching Sociology* or *The Journal of Chemical Education*, and then branch out into the broader field choosing such material as the *National Teaching and Learning Forum*, *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, or *The Teaching Professor*. They may attend instructional development sessions on that topic too. After trying out some of the solutions or ideas they've discovered in their research, they will test whether they have been successful by doing some formative evaluation with their students, adjusting their approach, asking a peer to come into their class to review their changes, and so on.

For many of these teachers, the process ends there with improved teaching and better student learning outcomes. In this example, scholarly teaching is informed, reflective, continuously developing. Its product is improved teaching and student learning outcomes:

> If more university teachers reflected on, evaluated and researched their practices, more scholarly teaching should result and, more significantly, the quality of learning of our students should be enhanced (Healey, 2002).

Other teachers go farther, however, and share the results of their research and classroom practice with their colleagues in more formal ways. They give a presentation to their teaching committees, send a description of their activities to a listserv or post it on a web site, present a session in their department or Faculty, give a conference presentation, or write a paper for publication. This latter case more closely meets the criteria for scholarship outlined in numerous sources including most universities' standards for promotion and tenure.

Hutchings and Shulman give a succinct description of the three characteristics of the Scholarship of Teaching: being public ("community property"), open to critique and evaluation, and in a form that others can build on (11).

Scholarly Process and Scholarly Product: The Net and the Haul
Definitions and standards for scholarly work give us clear criteria that are just as applicable to teaching as they are to laboratory experimentation or textual analysis. Take for example Glassick, Huber & Maeroff (1997), who say of their six standards, "Their very obviousness suggests their applicability to a broad range of intellectual projects":

1. Clear goals
2. Adequate preparation
3. Appropriate methods
4. Significant results
5. Effective presentation
6. Reflective critique

Scholarship, then, involves reflective, methodical inquiry contributed in a public, visible way to what is already known so that others can review and perhaps benefit from or add to our findings. The **process** by which an act is undertaken, the exacting standards to which it adheres, are as much the yardstick of scholarship as its outcomes. Scholarship encompasses much that is beyond the product itself: reflection, preparation, critique, and the value placed on the creative or intellectual work by one's peers or intended audience.

Aside from publication in peer-reviewed print journals, there are many other ways of subjecting one's scholarly work to public review: online publication, conference sessions, workshops, performance, and many more. As Lee Shulman points out:

> We are expected to share our knowledge by making it public, whether via publication, correspondence, presentations, or pedagogy. The new technologies make such exchange event more widely possible than before (2000: 49-50).

Several scholars, notably Cynthia Fukami (1997), herself a Carnegie Scholar, have pointed out that, if putting one's research findings into the public realm is a primary goal of scholarship, then teaching is a much better way of achieving that. Some research may make an impact, she argues, but most does not (5-6). Australian Andrew Page (1998) agrees:

> Teaching is a fundamentally important activity that scholars undertake. Without teaching, future scholarship would wither and die.

So while most teachers may embark on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning to effect improvements in their own classrooms, many will succeed in having an effect beyond their local setting "by adding knowledge to—and even beyond—their disciplinary field" (Cambridge, 1999).
Foremost among those who distinguish between *scholarly teaching* and the *Scholarship of Teaching* is Laurie Richlin. Richlin presents a process that begins with a teaching issue or problem, the search for a theoretical and practical solution, and review by students and peers. This process has two possible *(contd.)*

fulfillments. The first is improved practice, or scholarly teaching. What Richlin calls "the scholarship part of the process" is contingent upon the findings being "submitted to an appropriate journal or conference venue" (61).

In the following figure, I adapted Richlin's model for another paper that went on to suggest that the distinction was not so much about the difference between scholarly teaching and the Scholarship of Teaching, but between the *process (the outer ring)* and the *product (the inner ring)* of scholarship.

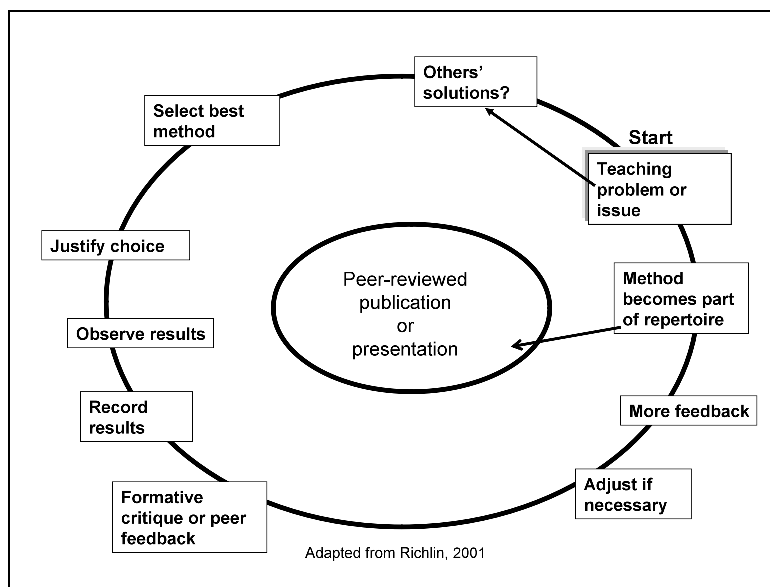

Figure Three: The Process and Product of Scholarship (Herteis, 2002[a])

Most researchers agree, however, that not all excellent teachers are scholarly teachers (for example Kreber, 2001; Weimer, 1997; Healey, 2000). Hutchings and Shulman express the distinction correctly when they say that the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is not just excellent teaching, "a responsibility that all teachers share," but rather a situation in which faculty pose and "systematically investigate" questions related to teaching improvement and student learning (11). As Carolin Kreber says:

> Both scholarly teaching and practising the Scholarship of Teaching involve being cognizant of the existing research-based or theory-based knowledge about teaching and using this knowledge to explain practice, as well as sharing one's insights in the form of the wisdom of practice in a way that can be peer-reviewed (2001:102).

Disseminating the Scholarship of Teaching

Perhaps a serious obstacle in the dissemination of SoTL is that its foundation is often a moment of difficulty: a teaching problem or issue. On most campuses, a research problem is seen as an opportunity, a chance for discovery from which understanding, creativity and productivity can emerge. Why, then, is a teaching problem seen as a weakness—something pathological? As Randy Bass of Georgetown University (1999) says, a 'problem' is something that you don't want to have in teaching. He goes on to

argue that SoTL is precisely about "changing the status of the problem in teaching from terminal remediation to on-going investigation."

I'd like to insert a word of caution here about the motivation for embarking on the Scholarship of Teaching, one echoed by Bill Cerbin, (quoted in Hutchings, 2001). He warns against the Scholarship of Teaching becoming just "one more hurdle or task" that must be completed for promotion or tenure. For Cerbin, the incentive is clear--undertake the Scholarship of Teaching because you are personally committed to teaching and learning: "There's an important message here about passions and pursuing ideas that really matter to you" (2). The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is undertaken, not as theoretical investigation (that is the purpose of Higher Education research); instead, more akin to applied research, SoTL's goal is always to effect practical, beneficial changes in teaching and learning.

Supporting Scholarship of Teaching
Diana Laurillard has lamented that while teachers need to know about the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, how their subject "can come to be understood, the ways it can be misunderstood, what counts as understanding. . . they are neither required nor enabled to know these things" (1993). University administrators, then, must create an atmosphere which both supports and encourages SoTL:

> It takes a supportive climate for any garden to grow. Administration's role in fostering a culture of scholarship around teaching and learning doesn't involve taking on the gardening job directly—administration's role is climate control (Thompson, 2001).

Or as Barbara Cambridge, then Director of AAHE's teaching initiatives project, asks in a 1999 article for the American Association for Higher Education:

> Who does the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning? Not everyone. Who can *support* the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning? Everyone.

In 1996, the Kellogg Commission was created in 1996 by the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) to help define the future direction of public universities in the US and to recommend an agenda to speed up the process of change. The Commission recognized the delicate balance between research, teaching and accountability, but among its conclusions is one that implicitly endorses SoTL:

Put learning first. . . . . .
Despite the vast scope and scale of our enterprises, learning remains the reason we exist. If public universities are to prosper in the future, they must become great student universities as well as great centres of research, focusing on their most basic mission and the compact which it embodies between institutions on the one hand and taxpayers, parents, students, and public officials on the other (41).

Recognizing and Rewarding the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
As we have seen, a wide range of work flourishes under what Mary Taylor Huber calls this "broad canopy" of scholarship; and furthermore, Glassick, Huber & Maeroff's 'standards for scholarly work' (1997) give us six clear criteria for measuring it. But what about recognition and reward?

In my STLHE session, I also asked the participants how they would like to see scholarly teaching nurtured and rewarded in their own institutions and beyond.

They agreed that, despite the wealth of material that describes and defines scholarly teaching and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, universities do not adequately reward this scholarship. *(contd.)*

Still needed are clear institutional definitions with corollary actions to explain what scholarly teaching is and is not. Solutions to this dilemma were broad—ranging from creating sabbatical leaves that focus on teaching to ensuring that award-winning and scholarly teachers are members of Promotion and Tenure committees.

Many participants saw a more political solution: lobbying for change in the wording of collective agreements and standards, for example. Several recommended involving the institution's Teaching and Learning Centre when new guidelines for promotion and tenure were being drawn up, so that the language of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is accurately included.

As long as we are trying to change an ingrained culture—that disciplinary research is the only valuable scholarship, we face many obstacles, said another. We must convince peers to engage in scholarly teaching, in action research in the classroom, and in hands-on research in their teaching. We must encourage them to consult, apply, present, write about, and publish on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Some suggested renaming teaching excellence awards "scholarly teaching" awards. For others, a semantic shift like this is not enough; we who care about the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, they say, need to act as role models and catalysts to educate and support our colleagues, thereby creating a "bottom up" movement of change.

As Maryellen Weimer says:

> A fundamental challenge faces all of us committed to instructional excellence—letting our thinking, discourse, and practice reflect the intrinsic value of teaching (58).

Scholarly Teaching Is Constantly Evolving

While, as we have seen, the terms scholarly teaching and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning have been used for almost two decades, the fruits of that scholarship are still often undervalued, dismissed, or ignored. Can it simply be that counting publications in refereed journals is easier than measuring the outcomes of teaching? Surely not.

Scholarly teaching is teaching that is constantly evolving and improving. Scholarly teachers establish clear goals for the course, focusing on what students will learn rather on the content they will "cover" (see page 11 in this issue). They prepare adequately, and they research and use a variety of appropriate methods. They reflect on their own practice and invite critique on their teaching from students and peers alike. Their teaching results in significant learning for their students. Their own findings, once made public, become scholarship and benefit others.

That's scholarly teaching. Practice it yourself. Provide evidence of it—when it's requested, and even when it isn't (see page 10). Recognize it when you see it in others. Reward it when you are in a position to do so.

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The Implications of "A Scholarship" of Teaching: Personal Reflections

Like my colleagues in educational development, I work to see the profile of teaching raised to that of a scholarly endeavour. The classroom has long been "a fine and private place" and professors have argued that teaching—something they see as immeasurably significant, so central to their scholarly lives—cannot be quantified. Yet these very arguments made to bolster teaching's importance have in fact led to uncertain measurement of its quality and inconsistent recognition and rewards for those who do it well. Recognizing that there is a Scholarship of Teaching means that we must also subject it to scrutiny and critique.

The emerging literature in the field reminds us that, if we want teaching to have the same profile as our research activities, then we must be willing to do a number of things, including to make it public and visible. That involves demonstrating achievement in teaching in the same way that we do <u>in</u> research and <u>for</u> research. Presenting evidence—from a variety of sound sources—is the *sine qua non* of good research. Those of us who believe in the importance of good teaching and further espouse the concept of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning also believe that we must provide commensurate evidence of achievement and accomplishment in our teaching.

Educational developers further believe that to provide evidence for research and not for teaching in the long run subordinates teaching and also diminishes the tireless efforts most professors invest in it and the substantial outcomes they achieve.

Some professors may think that evidence means only student evaluations of teaching, but appropriate evidence of teaching achievement, can encompass so much more. I list a few as examples (and for others consult the CAUT document on teaching dossiers):

- ✓ Course materials: syllabi; evidence of substantial course development or trying innovative approaches
- ✓ Self-Reflection: on the highlights of the year's teaching, major milestones, achievements, etc.
- ✓ A list of teaching goals (long-term or short term; achieved or pending)
- ✓ What has been learned from--or developed further based on--feedback from students or peers (rather than the mere presentation of the evaluation data itself)
- ✓ Feedback from colleagues--for example, have you heard from Dalhousie that your students are really well prepared when they enter the Master's Program?

- ✓ Efforts to gather mid-term formative feedback on teaching (as a demonstration of a concern for teaching excellence) and a copy of the instrument devised for this purpose--again, not necessarily the student comments themselves
- ✓ Pedagogical articles read or sessions attended and whether/how they resulted in changes to teaching.

Even setting aside issues of scholarship, it is important to provide up-to-date evidence of teaching effectiveness whenever one can, whether it is requested or not. In fact, I always encourage professors to keep and present careful records of their efforts to enhance their teaching and the results of those efforts. Any case, academic or legal, is based on evidence--not hearsay, not anecdote, not supposition, and not reputation (good or bad). Therefore, the ability to present evidence that, through its persuasiveness or just its sheer volume, refutes anecdote or supposition is one of the strongest weapons in a professor's arsenal, especially one who feels that his or her teaching effectiveness is being assailed unfairly.

Supplying evidence, requested or not, helps professors to strengthen their case. Furthermore, a request for evidence of teaching effectiveness communicates both an expectation of professionalism and a confidence of its presence; it shows respect for the colleague, an openness to hear and be convinced by his or her side of things. It says "I trust you and your integrity; I'm not going to insult you by basing important career decisions on unsubstantiated stories or claims. I want to see what you've done and understand your rationale for doing it."

Therefore, through PCTC workshops and the PCTC newsletter, I always encourage Mount Allison professors to gather and safeguard evidence of their teaching practice and to apply to their teaching the same exacting standards they do to other aspects of their scholarly work.

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Content & Discontent

In early March, a number of Mount Allison faculty members attended a PCTC workshop on content. We discussed the notion that our courses are becoming super-saturated, and we often have to race against the clock and the calendar to squeeze it all in. We sometimes reluctantly resort to testing strategies that encourage our students to stuff their short-term memories, without necessarily learning. We often balance on a knife's edge what we think is an appropriate amount of material, and one snow day or one sick day causes upheaval. We constantly struggle with ways to discover what is "enough," what is "need to know," and what is "nice to know."

The other balancing act is between the material and the *other* content: the skills and values we also consider to be part of the learning outcomes for the course; even though we may consider them essential, somehow we never quite get to all [or even most?] of them. *(contd.)*

What can you do? The following suggestions emerged from the workshop, and I share them here:
You'll soon be marking lots of tests and papers—they may be the first indication of how well you achieved your objectives in this term's courses. As you grade, as you read students' evaluations, do some self-reflection and keep track of your thoughts for the next time you teach the course, for example:

- ✓ What went right /wrong? What took longer to teach or for the students to understand than you had anticipated?
- ✓ Did you spend too long "covering" some material in the beginning, meaning that you were rushed nearer the end of the course? How much of this content needs to taught in class and how much should the students be reading for themselves outside of class?
- ✓ Is all of the content in your course there for a purpose? What does the content DO? What learning outcomes/teaching objectives does it help you fulfill? What external goals must it fulfill (e.g., accreditation, preparation for the next course--you could ask the next professor what s/he considers essential)?
- ✓ What is the purpose of the assignments, assessments, and learning activities in the class? What do you want the students to learn by (and maybe **while**) doing them?

In other words, you're choosing your content and assignments strategically. Maybe you'll find that less content/ more in-class practice will help you achieve your objectives--or maybe you won't. However, the exploration is worthwhile either way. Here are some more ideas:

- ✓ Look at your teaching goals with respect to the "other" outcomes, those that transcend content--writing, thinking, oral presentations, leadership. Choose your activities and instructional strategies to help you achieve them.
- ✓ As far as possible/or is appropriate, disclose to student the purpose of the content you have chosen and the strategies you are using. For example, although you may be using a particular content "set" in class (poem, problem, case study, etc.) when testing time comes around, you may not be testing the student on that particular content. You want to make sure that they know how to analyze other poems or solve other problems using the processes learned in class.
- ✓ Use your musings to construct your next course outline. During that course, you could a formative mid-term teaching evaluation that asks the students questions about content/workload and compare those to your own observations, and so the process rolls around to end of next term, and you keep going.

At each stage you may be pruning content--maybe as you cut some, you'll add more of a different kind; you'll be tweaking activities and assessments, too. Every few years you may do a complete overhaul. Teaching enhancement is iterative and developmental.

As you work on this--with the four wonderful months of summer stretching before us!--come to PCTC to get resources or discuss your ideas. (Oh, in case you didn't notice, this process of content renewal fits right in with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning!)

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