

PAIDEIA

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

While those of us in the academic world may—for appearance’s sake—toast January 1st, our new calendar truly begins in September. My native Scotland is famous for its “Hogmanay” traditions; one is “first-footing.” On the stroke of midnight, the head of the household opens the doors and windows to let the old year out and the new year in, and then welcomes a guest into the house. This first-foot over the threshold should be male, tall, dark and handsome. These characteristics have less to do with attractiveness, by the way, than the likelihood a person who meets this description will be Scottish, rather than a dreaded blond Norseman or Anglo-Saxon!

Of course, the new year is also characterized by hope, opportunities, and resolutions to do things better, or at least differently, in the next twelve months. Many professors spend the summer drawing up new year’s resolutions, and they are reflected in course syllabi: your resolve to include new material, to vary instructional strategies, to cover more (or less), to encourage your students’ critical thinking, and so on. You have likely considered what went well last year and anticipated how to deal with the problematic issues that arose: lack of student preparation, inattention, poor attendance, or disappointing performance. All of these thoughts and resolutions will be in your mind as you cross the threshold of your classroom or lab on the first day of the new academic year.

This “new year’s” issue of **PAIDEIA** contains a pot pourri of ideas to help you fulfill some of those academic resolutions. As always, I am very grateful to the many colleagues who have contributed, and I wish them and you a happy new year of teaching, learning, discovery, creativity, and scholarship.

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The Course Syllabus
Eileen M. Herteis
Purdy Crawford Teaching Centre

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" Alice asks the Cheshire Cat.
"That's depends a good deal on where you want to get to," the Cat replies.
(Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*)

Investing time to construct a detailed syllabus is worthwhile. Not only does the syllabus provide a roadmap for student learning, it sets the tone for the progress of the course and indicates to students that *you* have planned, prepared and organized, and they should do the same!

What Does the Syllabus Do?

The syllabus may be seen as a document that marries the professor's teaching philosophy with the subject matter since it reflects his or her values, attitudes, and beliefs about the subject, teaching, learning, and students.



Some see the syllabus as a contract between the professor and the student. The term of the contract extends from the beginning of the first class until the final grade is assigned. In a broader context, many Review Committees refer to the syllabus as an indicator of the quality of teaching and learning that takes place in a course.

Contract or not, the syllabus provides evidence of instructor planning, academic rigour, and

content coverage to the class, the institution, other professors, other institutions or accreditation bodies.

There are two general types of syllabi.

The *traditional* syllabus is primarily a source of information for your students, from acquainting students with the quotidian logistics of the class to describing the long-term expectations for success.

While including basic information, the *learning-centered* syllabus can be an important learning tool that will emphasize the strategies that you will use to promote learning, actively describe the specific learning outcomes your students should achieve, precisely outline how the outcomes will be measured, and provide a context and list support for learning. Professors still make their expectations explicit in a learning-centered syllabus; however, they focus on what the students will do, learn, and achieve, thereby reassigning the responsibility for learning to the students themselves.

The Traditional (Nuts & Bolts) Syllabus

Although it is most certainly recognized that the requirements of each professor and each course are different, there are some basic components that should be included in every syllabus.

- Instructor Information:

Include office hours, contact information and preferences.

- Course Information:

Describe the course and its purpose. Explain what your students should be able to do by the end of the course. This outline may be general or quite specific according to your judgment.

- Resources:

List the textbooks and readings required, including materials on reserve in the Library or available elsewhere. (*contd.*)



- Course requirements:

List and explain all of the students' responsibilities and assignments, including your attendance or participation policy.

- Evaluation:

This section should describe all of the assignments and exams and their value. Make it specific enough to prevent challenges about grades.

- Due Dates:

In a list or table, provide the schedule and due dates for required readings, projects, assignments, in-class exams, and other important landmarks.

- Requirements for Written Assignments:

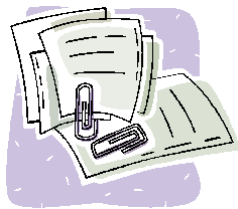
For example: *All written assignments will be word-processed, with standard margins and 12-point font, using the APA style manual. Proofread your work.*

- Policy on Extensions, Assignment Due Dates, and Exams:

This statement may prevent skirmishes later concerning late assignments. Under what circumstances (if any) are extensions given or late assignments accepted: bereavement, sudden illness, computer problems, mischievous dogs, etc.?

- Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism:

Always include a specific statement about academic dishonesty and detail procedures for handling offenses.



The Learning-Centred Syllabus

The syllabus that serves as a learning tool for students will likely contain *additional*

elements that describe their active involvement in learning.

The following are some suggestions:

- Professor's reflections about the course content and why this material has been chosen; the predominant learning activities in the class, and why the professor has chosen them.
- Relevance and importance of the course to students, in terms of its place in the broader curriculum; the insights it will provide; the questions it will help students answer; the skills, knowledge or values it will help them develop.
- Information on how to plan for the semester, including time-management skills, guidance on how to do well on assignments, or specific study strategies and learning resources.
- A list of university resources that can provide assistance to students
- Description of grades and assessment criteria, descriptions or examples of an "A" performance, sample rubrics, and so on.[§]

The First Day of Class

When your syllabus is unveiled on the first day, don't just hand it out; review and discuss it with your students. Encourage questions about the content, your testing and grading policies, and other matters of concern to students. Try using the syllabus as a learning tool by conducting an exercise like the one that follows on page 4.

[§] The next issue of PAIDEIA will include an article on rubrics by Dr. Erin Steuter.



INTERESTS, CONCERNS, AND FREE ASSOCIATIONS

Your students read the syllabus, then introduce themselves to a colleague, stating their major field of study and their interests in and concerns about the course as outlined in the syllabus. Then they present their partner's responses to the class. As the information is presented, note it in columns on the board labeled "Interests" and "Concerns," and respond.

Already you have created interaction among students, and between students and yourself. You have discovered your students' reasons for taking the class and made it easier for them to remember the goals and objectives of the class because they've been actively engaged in discussing them.

The second part of the process involves students in free-associating with a key word in the title of the course. Ask students to call out their associations, and then write them on the board without comment. Once the board is filled, work with the students to evaluate these words into positive, negative, or content-oriented categories. Then discuss them.

Source: Brodeur, Donald. "Interests, Concerns, and Free Associations," in Wright, W. A., & E. M. Herteis. (1993). *University Teaching and Learning: An Instructional Resource Guide for Teaching Assistants*. Halifax, NS: Dalhousie University Press.

In sum, before you plan a course, ask yourself:

- What do I want students to know?
- What content will help me to achieve my objectives?
- What resources and strategies will I use?
- How will I assess whether the students have met the objectives?

Syllabus Resources Available from PCTC

Gross Davis, B. (2001). *Tools for Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Also available online at <http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/syllabus.html>

McKeachie, W. (2002). *Teaching Tips*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Nilson, L. (2003). *Teaching at Its Best*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.

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Taking Risks & Being Off-Balance

Taking more risks may not be at the forefront of your plans for the new academic year, nor, I'll hazard, is the desire to remain slightly off-balance, yet Peter Beidler[§], an award-winning professor from Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, sees complacency and comfort as the enemies of good teaching and learning. For Beidler, trying things that may fail adds excitement: "If there is no chance of failure, then success is meaningless."

Beidler argues that academic freedom gives us the opportunity to take chances and that our students actually like us to do so. Taking risks also leads to learning—for the professor and for the students. Beidler says his own learning depends on challenging his comfort and self-assurance, and keeping himself off-balance:

"When I feel comfortable with a course and can predict how it will come out, I become bored; and when I get bored, I *am* boring. I try, then, to do all I can to keep myself learning more. I do that in part by putting myself in threatening situations."

Beidler suggests keeping students off balance, too: forcing them to confront (*contd.*)



challenges, leading them into unfamiliar places where they feel uncomfortable and where they cannot simply sneak by on past knowledge or skills. Of course, this does not mean leaving students adrift, but rather making every effort to foster and reinforce their sense of achievement as they develop the ability to overcome challenges:

“Good teachers, as soon as their students have mastered something, push their best students well past the edge of their comfort zone, striving to make them uncomfortable, to challenge their confidence so they can earn a new confidence.”

§Beidler, P. “What Makes A Good Teacher?” In Roth J & ed. *Inspiring Teaching: Carnegie Professors of the Year Speak*. Boston, Mass: Anker Publishing Co; 1997.

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Student Writing

Perhaps assigning more writing is one of your goals for this academic year. Last semester, the Advisory Committee on the First-Year Experience conducted an online survey of all Mount Allison students asking them to indicate which additions would enhance first-year students’ experience at Mount Allison. The first question was about writing, and as you can see below, students overwhelmingly supported the creation of a writing centre.

[Indicate whether you think that the following would be helpful:]

1) A professionally-staffed resource centre to assist with developing skills in writing, along with other academic skills.

Not Helpful	17
No Opinion	81
Helpful	305

These student responses, together with follow-up student focus groups, led the committee to this conclusion on page 8 of its May 11, 2006 report to the Vice-President (Academic & Research):

Current measures for writing assistance, which include consultations with student writing tutors cooperatively funded by Student Life and the Department of English Literatures, were seen to be woefully inadequate. Students also expressed support for the use of more carefully phased or graduated assignments in writing-intensive courses – assignments that would afford the opportunity to draft and re-draft a paper.

Second among the committee’s twelve recommendations in the report was the creation of a Centre to Support Academic Literacy:

The centre, we believe, should be staffed initially by two professionals with expertise in writing-across-the-curriculum – one, a director, with a PhD in rhetoric/writing, and the other, a staff member, with a master’s degree and experience with teaching writing-across-the-curriculum and in training student writing-tutors—and it should be housed in an academic building, preferably the library. (p. 9).

Specifically, what might work at Mount Allison to fulfill students’ articulated needs and the committee’s recommendation? What existing models might we adapt?

Gillian Connolly worked as a summer research assistant at PCTC, and she undertook a study of writing centres in universities across Canada. Following on page 6 is an excerpt from her longer report.



University Writing Centres in Canada

Gillian Connolly, PCTC Summer Research Assistant

Across Canada, many universities are rising to the challenge of fostering learning through the instruction and development of writing and language skills. Out of the 90 institutions in the country accredited by the AUCC - Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, more than 50 have implemented some form of writing centre in order to assist students with their academic writing skills.

There is a great deal of diversity among Canadian university writing centres in terms of facilities, hours, staff, and services offered. While programs that involve peer tutoring and access to one-on-one writing help are standard, some centres go beyond this mandate to offer services that will help students to achieve an even higher level of writing competence.

These services include but are not limited to the following: online resources, online writing assistance, printed reference materials and reference libraries, credit and non-credit courses in university writing or other writing areas of interest, in-class seminars, workshops, help-sessions, summer courses and university preparatory courses in academic writing, essay-exam preparation, language diagnostic test preparation, ESL instruction, and faculty research in the area of student writing.

New Trends: Writing Centre Technology

At the University of Saskatchewan, the writing centre offers excellent one-on-one tutoring and extra-help services such as those listed above. In addition to these

services, the writing centre also offers an innovative online writing lab, or OWL, to facilitate student learning.

In an online tutorial, the student and a tutor exchange electronic messages about the student's work. This may be accomplished through email dialogue or by inserting comments into the actual paper and sending it back and forth electronically. This quickly gets conversation going between the student and the tutor and eliminates the hassle of time constraints and scheduling difficulties. Students are able to interact with their online tutors on their own time, from home, or from away if they are completing an online or distance education course. OWL tutors discuss the assignment, recommend appropriate research sources, comment on organization, suggest proofreading strategies, point out repetitive issues regarding grammar, mechanics and usage, and suggest strategies for revision.

UBC and Guelph: Two Models of Excellence

While there are many outstanding writing centres in Canada, one that is especially noteworthy is that of the **University of British Columbia**. This centre is set apart by its wide array of courses and programs. The UBC Writing Centre operates in its own building, with its own administrative staff. By operating independently, the writing centre has the opportunity to expand, to develop, and to establish itself firmly as a cohesive unit.

The UBC Writing Centre offers credit and non-credit courses in academic, professional, business, creative, and personal writing. It also prepares students to write a LPI – Language Proficiency Index test or other similar language skill assessment tests.
(*contd.*)



The UBC Writing Centre offers courses on a variety of topics, such as, improving grammar, writing essays, writing reports and business correspondence. Its services are free to UBC students, and for a fee the centre will also offer workshops to private companies and businesses. Centre staff provide one-on-one tutoring, summer writing workshops, online writing courses and student resources. In recognition of its high standard of excellence, the UBC Writing Centre has received many awards for its outstanding instructors and programs.

Although some writing centres, such as the one at UBC, thrive on their independence, at other universities writing centres operate as part of a larger-scale student learning and development centre. **The Learning Commons at the University of Guelph** amalgamates student assistance in the areas of learning, writing, research, and use of technology.

"This seamless approach to academic support services makes it easy for students to get individual help, find and access resources, and learn in collaborative settings all in one location."- University of Guelph

The Guelph Learning Commons is located on the first floor of the library, and incorporates the expertise of librarians, professional staff, peer helpers, and student consultants to assist students with their academic needs. It integrates the following services: an IT help desk, learning services (time management, learning and study skills), a library centre for students with disabilities, library research help, information literacy, supported learning groups program, writing services and ESL support. There are also online resources, and student services such as Webmail and WebCT are linked directly from the learning commons website.

While all Canadian university writing centres are different and vary in terms of their location, facilities, hours of operation, qualification levels of staff and resources, they all have the common goal of improving the quality of student writing across all academic levels.

For more information about these University Writing Centres, visit the following sites:

British Columbia

<http://www.writingcentre.ubc.ca/>

Guelph

<http://www.learningcommons.uoguelph.ca/>

Saskatchewan

<http://www.extension.usask.ca/owl/>

Other Resources:

For over a decade, Purdue University's online writing lab has offered excellent resources for students and professors.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

The University of Northern British Columbia's Learning Skills Centre offers dozens of handouts on writing.

<http://www.unbc.ca/lsc/handouts/writing.html>

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"Writing is to university study as health is to productive, enjoyable lives: every member of the university community employs it, every member of the university community depends upon its vigour and its usefulness, and every member shares the responsibility for its development and its discipline, especially among those who are new to the academy."

Dr. Susan Drain,

Mount Saint Vincent University,
in her acceptance of the 2003 AAU

Instructional Leadership Award

http://atlanticuniversities.ca/aa_u_2841.html



Learning Objectives

A syllabus that focuses on learning objectives (or student learning outcomes) describes how students will be different after class in terms of knowledge, skills, and—perhaps—attitudes. In other words, what will students learn, what will they know after the course that they did not know before it, and what will they be able to do that they could not do (so well) before the class?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Learning objectives allow students to see what is expected of them in a course; they provide a sense of purpose and direction. Objectives also provide guidelines for evaluation by outlining outcomes that can be tested or measured.

Good learning objectives are measurable and observable—that is, the student must be able to perform a task in order to demonstrate their fulfillment. For that reason, concrete verbs—*list*, *classify*, *define*, or *solve*—are much better than nebulous words like *discuss*, *understand*, or *learn*.

Objectives describe students' **actions** and the visible and measurable outcomes of their learning. When creating the learning objectives, consider the following questions:

- What should the learner be able to do?
- Under what conditions; e.g., with or without cues, resources, dictionary, equipment?
- To what standards: how fast, how accurately, how often?

See below for some learning objectives that may be appropriate for a prosody class.

Sample Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, the students will be able to:

- Scan any given poem for its meter
- Identify a given poem's rhyme scheme
- Describe the distinctive meter and rhyme of specific poetic forms

With the objectives clearly delineated and understood, you and the students can now prepare for assessment knowing the criteria and better able to measure successful learning in a meaningful way.

Bloom's Taxonomy

When you create student learning objectives, remember Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Objectives:

1. **Knowledge:** recalling learned material; rote learning
2. **Comprehension:** grasping meaning and restating it in different words
3. **Application:** using already learned material in new ways or contexts
4. **Analysis:** understanding the component parts or structure of the material
5. **Synthesis:** re-assembling the component parts into something new
6. **Evaluation:** judging the value of the material in a particular context

Make sure that you create objectives that encourage students to engage in more than rote learning. Include objectives that embrace the high-order cognitive skills, too. Table One on the following page suggests suitable starter verbs for listing these objectives in your syllabus. You may also find them useful in creating discussion or exam questions. Please contact PCTC if you would like more information or resources on Learning Objectives (pctc@mta.ca).



Table One: Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives in the Cognitive Domain

<i>Bloom's Cognitive Level</i>	<i>Student should be able to</i>	<i>Starter Verb for Objectives</i>
1. Knowledge	Acquire specific facts, ideas, or vocabulary Recall and move information from short-term to long-term memory	Define List Record Repeat Name Recall
2. Comprehension	Grasp the meaning of material learned Communicate to others what has been learned and interpret it Reach understanding	Describe Argue Explain Identify Locate Report
3. Application	Use already learned knowledge in different, active, or concrete ways Employ knowledge to solve new problems	Apply Illustrate Demonstrate Dramatize Employ Use
4. Analysis	Take ideas and knowledge apart Dismantle concepts into their components and seek links between concepts (compare) or find what is unique (contrast)	Analyze Calculate Distinguish Examine Experiment Relate Solve
5. Synthesis	Re-organize what has been learned to create a new or original concept or idea Make predictions based on analysis of knowledge	Arrange Compose Formulate Construct Plan Design Create
6. Evaluation	Make judgements or decisions based on logical criteria or conditions Rate or assess conclusions Make valid choices	Assess Select Rate Estimate Compare Judge Revise

Bloom, Benjamin S. (Ed). Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook I. Cognitive Domain (pp. 201-207). New York: McKay. 1956



Dear Counsellor
Kris Trotter
Personal Counsellor, Student Life

*Dear Counsellor,
I know that Mount Allison has many professional staff to help students with problems affecting their studies: two part-time Personal Counsellors, a Nurse Educator, a Sexual Harassment Advisor, a Chaplain, a Special Needs Advisor, a Financial Aid Counsellor, an Academic and Career Counsellor, an International Student Advisor... but how do I differentiate among these roles? How do I know when and where and to whom I can refer a student?*

Dear Professor:

Student Life provides various documents, guides and directories each September for new and returning students, faculty and staff. But on that winter day when the tearful student in your office agrees to make an appointment with a professional, you may not remember what you've done with this orientation material. Simply turn to your little "Faculty-Staff Directory," where you will find the number for the Student Life Department. Our office administrator, Tina Warren, will gladly listen to the details of your situation and refer you to the correct staff person. Often there are several people who could assist in any given situation - in this case Tina will direct you to the one she knows to be most readily available. Please note that students should make their own appointments – you can assist by offering the immediate use of your phone.

As for the "where" of your question, until there is a new Student Centre, we certainly are located at various sites around the campus (which isn't necessarily a bad thing, as it offers choices). The Sexual Harassment Advisor, the Nurse Educator, and one of the Personal Counsellors are located in the

Student Health Centre on Salem (Sprague House). The International Student Advisor, the Academic and Career Counsellor, the Advisor to Students with Special Needs, the Dean of Students and the other Personal Counsellor are in the basement of the current University Centre. This year the Chaplain will maintain an office in Hart Hall as well as in the Chapel. And the Financial Aid Advisor (technically not part of the Student Life team, but don't let that confuse you) is found in Centennial Hall. Before a student heads out to meet with a resource person, please help her ascertain that she is heading to the right office. Students who end up in the wrong building for their appointment will be directed to the right office.

"When" a student can see one of these resource people depends on many variables. In any professional practice, there are peak-demand periods when wait-times are longer than usual. The Chaplain and the International Student Advisor generally maintain drop-in office hours for students. The Personal Counsellors and the Nurse Educator, who work by appointment only due to high-volume demand, endeavour to keep wait times to a very reasonable 2 to 7 days. The Academic and Career Counsellor, the Financial Aid Counsellor and the Dean of Students usually can offer same-day or next-day appointment times for students.

Students who live in residence have a deep network of student-staff and Dons who are available at all hours every day. Students living off-campus are currently directed to community resources such as police, hospitals and crisis lines for evening and weekend crisis services. Most of the university's helping staff are listed in the public phone book and can be consulted evening and weekends for pressing matters.

(Please reserve middle-of-the-night home calls to dire emergencies only.) (*contd.*)



Dear Counsellor (*contd.*)

As well, all staff have confidential voice mail at the university where you may leave your inquiries or concerns at any time. You will receive responses on the same or the next working day.

We are here to assist you with problem situations. We welcome consultation with the caveat that, due to privacy regulations, we cannot respond to questions about a specific student, including whether we have met with him or her, without written permission from the student to share that information.

I'll close by reminding you that we would be very pleased to attend Department meetings to describe our capabilities (and, yes, our limitations!) and respond to your general questions.

*Students' personal and academic lives intersect on many levels. **Dear Counsellor** is a regular feature in our newsletter. Columns are written by Mount Allison's Personal Counsellors, Kris Trotter and Christiana McDougall-Fleming. Kris wrote this column.*



Kris and Christiana

*If you have a question you'd like addressed in **Dear Counsellor**, please e-mail it to Eileen at pctc@mta.ca. To contact Kris or Christiana directly, please call 364-2255.*

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SEEQ Update

The Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning is delighted that 19 professors used the Student Evaluation of Educational Quality form (SEEQ) as part of our online pilot project in April. These colleagues were able to access their students' comments after the deadline for submission of final grades.

To evaluate the participating professors' satisfaction with the process, a survey was distributed in May. The following five conclusions can be drawn:

1. Professors received sufficient information about using SEEQ.
2. Most did not add questions to the core form, but those who did found it straightforward to do.
3. Most found accessing the student comments easy, any limitations being those of WebCT itself.
4. Most were happy with
 - the online approach
 - the quality of the responses
 - the flexibility of the system.
5. Some were disappointed with the number of students who responded compared to the numbers who respond to in-class evaluations.

The Committee is optimistic that, with the support of SAC and greater awareness across campus, we can increase student participation during the fall semester.

The Committee is still working towards its goal of universal availability of the SEEQ form online. There will be further information about this at the Fall Teaching Day, in future issues of PAIDEIA, and as part of PCTC's ongoing programming.

Visit www.mta.ca/pctc for more information about SEEQ.



In Their Own Words

Our new regular column in PAIDEIA continues in this issue with

Dr. Erin Steuter, Sociology.

This year, Dr. Steuter has received three awards: Mount Allison's Herbert and Leota Tucker Teaching Award and Paul Paré Award of Excellence, as well as the Association of Atlantic Universities' Distinguished Teacher Award.



Dr. Erin Steuter

This has been a stellar year for you, winning the Tucker, and the AAU Distinguished Teaching Award—just how important is teaching to you?

I think about teaching every day. I think about what is going well and take satisfaction in it. I think about what isn't working and develop ideas to fix it. I think of the teaching challenges faced by my colleagues and provide unsolicited advice to them. I think about my role in the classroom and the nature of my relationship with students. I think of new things that I can try and ways to re-vamp the tried and true. Reflecting on teaching is one of the chief joys of my profession.

It sounds as though you are always working at your teaching.

I am. I once had a course that I hated teaching. It was too big to suit my teaching style and it wasn't working for me or my students. On hearing my complaints, one of my colleagues stated that he always had one course that he

hated to teach and that was just the way it was sometimes. I couldn't bear the thought of having a hated course in my rotation, so I kept trying new approaches. It took almost 10 years but I eventually found the right solution and now happily teach this first year course with over 200 students using an experiential approach complete with hands-on workbook activities. I believe that there is a solution to every pedagogical problem and it is worth the trouble to find it!

You deal with some controversial subjects in your classes. How do you encourage students to discuss these topics openly?

One of my first principles of teaching is that learning must take place in a safe space in which students are never mocked, where all ideas can be legitimately explored, where passionate debate takes place within a climate of respect and civility, and where students feel safe enough to try out new ideas and explore new forms of learning. I never require students to agree with me or with any given perspective. They always know that while they must demonstrate accurate knowledge of the material, they are completely free to develop their own informed perspective on the issues. Nothing would mortify me more than if I had in any way silenced a student in the classroom. I think freedom of thought and speech are the cornerstone of a good education and I seek to uphold them in my classroom every day.

Doesn't this openness ever backfire?

Universities are places of growth and development where students need to be able to learn from their mistakes without facing insurmountable penalties. If students submit late work, miss class or are guilty of academic dishonesty, there must be appropriate consequences for their actions, but they also need a second chance to show that they can mature and develop their skills. I often provide my students with a "get out of jail free card," which allows them a one-week extension, no questions asked, to be used once at any time in (contd.)



the term. I am never “at war” with my students. I enjoy their stages of academic maturation and offer firm and consistent penalties with a good measure of humour and tolerance for the inevitable missteps of the undergraduate learning curve.

On the other hand, I have never been one of the teachers who are friends with the students—it just isn’t my way. However, I do care tremendously about the students’ learning process. I seek to ensure that I am fair, that I respond to their concerns, that I take into consideration the rest of their workload and their life activities. I also am very careful about recognizing power dynamics with my students and respecting professional boundaries.

Students have commented on the variety of learning exercises and assignments you give. That must take a lot of planning.

I’m the kind of person who reads all the guidebooks before I go on a trip, so I will know all the details in advance! Providing a well organized and structured course is a central priority for me as. I very carefully plan out all the course components, dues dates, duration of units, and structures of evaluation. The students always know from the first day of class how the course will unfold, and of course I have also scheduled in unexpected delays and opportunities for creative side trips and tangents! Someone once told me that trying to learn huge amounts of information in a course, is like trying take a drink from a fire hydrant; therefore, I try to pace the course material so that students can have enough time to process and reflect on the new material.

Do you have a primary learning objective for your students?

I have many, but critical thinking is especially important. Developing the skills to analyze social situations with insight and sophistication is the central tenet of my discipline and I embrace this mission whole-heartedly. I regularly ask students to consider who benefits

and loses by the current social arrangements of various institutions in our society. We explore core critical thinking concepts, such as blaming the victim, unanticipated consequences, and vested interests; we examine how certain forms of knowledge become authoritative while others are marginalized; we deconstruct the concept of objectivity in the media. Students who have taken courses with me leave with a toolkit full of critical thinking strategies to help them make sense of their social world.

**You are warmly invited to attend
this year’s Tucker Presentation**

featuring

DR. ERIN STEUTER, SOCIOLOGY

**2006 RECIPIENT OF THE HERBERT AND
LEOTA TUCKER TEACHING AWARD**

***“The University as Cooking School:
Master Chefs, Apprentice Cooks &
Diners”***

Dr. Erin Steuter shares the ways in which she uses Discovery Learning to foster curiosity and support active student engagement in learning. Her research into media analysis provides a foundation for teaching students how to critically evaluate information in our increasingly wired world. Careful preparation, fresh ingredients and the secrets of a well-stocked pantry are part of her recipe to ensure that her students come to class with a good appetite and leave well nourished.



**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 30TH
3 PM, AVARD DIXON G12
(CLOSING THE PCTC TEACHING DAY)
RECEPTION TO FOLLOW**



Citius, Altius, Fortius:
Information Literacy Meets the
Olympics

Elizabeth Millar, Reference and
Information Literacy Librarian

I've been thinking about the Olympics lately. This is not because I watched many of the events taking place in Turin in February (although I did), but because the Orientation theme this year is "Go For the Garnet and Gold."

One busy afternoon during Orientation Week, over 600 first-year students will be coming to the library, and we want to make their experience here as specific to the Greek/Olympic theme as possible. Librarians have learned that the more relevant we can make our classes to the students' immediate needs the more beneficial the sessions are—for everyone.

The Olympic motto is "Citius, Altius, Fortius" (Faster, Higher, Stronger). The key points of the five Information Literacy Standards of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)—"Know, Access, Evaluate, Use, Understand"—don't evoke quite the same effect, but parallels between athletics and information literacy can be drawn.

In both cases the most effective training centres provide superior equipment, coaching, and support systems. A grounding in theoretical concepts enhances performance on the field and at the keyboard. Constant practice sharpens skills. Reviewing results determines what will happen next, whether it's adjusting equipment or preparing an argument for an essay. Unlike the Olympics, taking a formal oath isn't usually required in information literacy, but acting with integrity is identified in the last IL Standard which addresses the importance of understanding

economic, legal, and social issues surrounding information, and the ethical and legal use of it.

Our Orientation Team has created a scavenger hunt to introduce the students to the library building, the resources we have, and the services we offer. "Information Literacy" doesn't appear on the list of tasks, yet there are IL elements to the activity. Students will learn they can collect points toward the next day's "Mount A-lympics" if they complete a library event, and instructions on how to do so will be provided by greeters stationed at the entrance. This addresses ACRL-IL Standard One: the students will *know* they have an information need (what do they have to do?) and we can help them determine the nature and extent of their need. By coming to the library, receiving those instructions, and potentially asking for help they will *access* the needed information (Standard Two). Standard Three's *evaluating* information may occur when the students are compiling their responses onto the one sheet their group will submit. (Are the answers right? How can they be sure?) Standard Four—*using* information to accomplish a specific purpose—is obvious, as using information to complete the event will fulfill their goal of earning group points. Beyond encouraging students to not solicit answers from other groups, *understanding* information's ethical and legal aspects as identified in Standard Five will likely have to wait for another day.

While the students will probably see the scavenger hunt as just another (hopefully) fun orientation event, we can use it as a starting point when we start formally teaching them about Information Literacy. And then, over the next four years, we can help them learn to improve the efficiency of their research process, the quality of the resources they use, and the vigour of their arguments. "Faster, Higher, Stronger" indeed!

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Mobile Learning

Toni Roberts,
Educational Technology Consultant

Distance learning is quite common today, and correspondence courses have been popular for several decades. E-learning, as a subset of distance learning, has increased the scope and reach of distance learning. However, a newer subcategory of e-learning has emerged in the last few years and it may prove to be ubiquitous: m-learning.

M-learning falls within the rubric of e-learning and shares in common access to telecommunications networks, such as the internet. M-learning is distinct in that it assumes the mobility of the learners and the device they are using: PDAs, hand-held computers, cell phones, and mobile audio and video players, such as iPods. These devices all connect to the internet or some telecommunications network at some time. Therefore, although a connection is required, the main distinction between e-learning and m-learning is the mobility of the learners and their devices.

Flexibility is a major advantage in e-learning; in m-learning flexibility is increased even more. Whether downloading content or connecting live, learners can access content on a bus, on a treadmill, while a passenger in a car, or just walking in their neighbourhoods. Students can review lectures, concentrate on areas they find difficult, and study for their upcoming exams anytime, anyplace. The potential for pervasiveness is obvious, especially when combined with the increase in wireless connectivity.

From a pedagogical point of view, m-learning is really no different from other content delivery methods. Content can be delivered effectively using a desktop, laptop, text book, or iPod; further, interactivity can

be increased or encouraged with certain devices. *How that content is used* is really the nuts and bolts of the pedagogical issue. Delivering the content with a mobile device means that face-to-face time can be employed more effectively to examine, question, reflect on and acquire input on the content; i.e., to think critically, establish a constructivist pedagogy, provide scaffolding, and so on.

Mobile devices lend themselves well to constructivist pedagogies and interactivity. The Mobile Learning Pilot Project Consortium explored the effectiveness and efficiency of hand-held wireless devices in a first-year accounting class. Their report states:

In the final survey, faculty reported that the digital content helped them to teach accounting but that the PDA device as such did not make accounting more interesting to teach. They thought that the most important new teaching strategy was more student interactivity with content ... They also noted that use of the PDA enabled them to encourage independent student learning because they could adopt a coaching role.[§]

Mobile learning is expected to become more and more popular. Students involved in pilot projects implementing m-learning have been overwhelmingly positive about their experience. As a way of providing students with more tools to satisfy their diverse pedagogical styles of learning, m-learning is a good fit.

[§]Judy Roberts, B.A. (Hons), M.A., Naomi Beke, B.A., M.Sc., Katharine Janzen, B.Sc.N., Ed.D., Dawn Mercer, Ph.D., Elaine Soetaert, M.Ed. (2003). **HARVESTING FRAGMENTS OF TIME: Mobile Learning Pilot Project.** http://www.mcgrawhill.ca/college/mlearning/mlern_report.pdf

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Fall for Teaching--Again! Fêtons la Rentrée!

Wednesday, August 30th
Location: Avarad Dixon, G12 and G10

- 8:30 **Registration:** Coffee, juice and muffins will be served
- 9:00 **Introduction:** Eileen Herteis, PCTC Director
- 9:05 **Welcome:** President Robert Campbell
- 9:15 **Teaching Triumphs**
- 9:45 **Adding Learning Portfolios to Your Panoply of Assessment Techniques:**
Eileen Herteis, PCTC Director
- 10:15 **ASIN—Atlantic Scholarly Information Network Portal:** Jeff Lilburn, Public Services Librarian
- 11:00 **SEQ: A Framework for Enhancing Your Teaching:** Eileen Herteis & Toni Roberts
- 11:30 **Students' Judgments of Learning:** Jennifer Tomes & Louise Wasylikiw, Psychology
- 12:00 **Lunch (provided).** Exhibits and demonstrations from faculty and student recipients of PCTC's Scholarship of Teaching and Learning grants. Come see some of the wonderful projects that were initiated during the summer!
- 1:15 **What the Educational Technology Consultant Can Do For You:** Toni Roberts
- 1:45 **Student Honour Codes—Their Value and Implications:** Andrew Nurse, Canadian Studies, & student Harry Borlase
- 2:15 **"Professionalism" Marks vs. Participation Marks:** Elizabeth Wells, Music
- 2:45 BREAK

2006 TUCKER PRESENTATION

The University as Cooking School: Master Chefs, Apprentice Cooks, and Diners

Dr. Erin Steuter, Sociology

2006 Herbert & Leota Tucker Teaching Award Recipient

3-4 PM

President Robert Campbell invites attendees to a reception at Cranewood after the Tucker Presentation.

