



**PAIDEIA: TEACHING & LEARNING AT MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY**

*THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PURDY CRAWFORD TEACHING CENTRE*

**Thanks to Andrew Faulkner, Crake Fellow in Classics, for our elegant new name. Andrew writes:**

*“PAIDEIA is the ancient Greek word meaning “teaching, education, learning” (still used in the more restricted sense of “education” in modern Greek).*

*This name would be appropriate for Mount Allison in that its use in Greek encompasses a large scope of learning and education, from academic to physical education, to fine arts. Thus, in one short word, it is possible to imply a great deal about the aims of the newsletter. It would also, in my opinion, give a classical flavour entirely appropriate to the university.”*

Other suggestions included the following:

Pinnacle, Tributary, Centred, Centrepoint, Learning Together, Symphony, The Torch, Scholarship, Sage Words, Enquiry.

Warmest thanks to the following colleagues who made suggestions: Laurie Ricker, Alex Fancy, Bob Hawkes, Elizabeth Millar, Judith Doyle, Craig Brett, Deborah Wills and Nauman Farooqi.

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## ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING

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With last semester's grading barely a memory and midterms looming, are you ready to think about more assessment?

At its best, assessment should be a form of learning for our students, and good assessment practices *do* teach students a great deal. So how can we make the most of assessment to make it easier on the instructor and more meaningful for the students?

Well, the time to think about assessment is long before exam period; in fact, good assessment begins with creating a course outline that contains clear learning objectives.

The STLHE's *Ethical Principles in University Teaching* (1996) tell us that a pedagogically competent teacher "communicates the objectives of the course to students, is aware of alternative instructional methods or strategies, and selects methods of instruction that . . . are effective in helping students to achieve the course objectives."

<http://www.tss.uoguelph.ca/STLHE/ethical.html>

Most course outlines, however, focus not on learning objectives but on "covering" content:

*History 1101 covers British History from the Norman Invasion of 1066 to the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660.*

A course outline that focuses on learning objectives 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

Good learning objectives allow students to see what is expected of them in a course.

They enable teachers to gauge whether the course has been effective.

They provide guidelines for evaluation by outlining outcomes that can be tested or measured.

They should be measurable, observable and performance based.

Good Objectives are **C-L-E-A-R:**

**Comprehensible** to the student

**Learner-Centered** rather than focused on content

**Evident** in achievement and in significance

**Attainable** in the learning context available

**Related** to the course content, **relevant** to the student's state of development, and

**replicable** (for achieving a particular level only *once* is no real measure of learning)

Before you plan a course, ask yourself:

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

Planning curricula should be based. . . not on what . . . we want to teach and how we will teach, but on the meaningful learning experiences that students need to have. What are the outcomes we want and how are we going to use the disposable time of our students?

Chris Knapper, Queen's University

Objectives describe students' **actions** and the visible or measurable outcomes of their learning. Consider the following:

- What should the learner be able to do?
- Under what conditions: cues, resources, equipment?
- To what standards: speed, accuracy, frequency?

For example, the following objective is rather weak since it is difficult to measure:

**Biology 1101**

Students will understand the theory of evolution.

Compare the clarity of the following objective:

**Latin 1101**

By the mid-term, without the aid of a Latin-English dictionary, students will translate Catullus's "Carmen 1" with fewer than three errors.

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.



**WHY DO WE ASSESS STUDENTS?**

Good question! Assessment shows students their areas of strength and motivates them to improve, or continue to do well.

Assessment reveals to the instructors the students' progress and helps instructors evaluate their teaching.

Assessment provides a basis upon which grades are determined.

Again, the STLHE *Ethical Principles* document emphasizes the link between objectives and assessment:

"Given the importance of assessment of student performance in university teaching and in students' lives and careers, instructors are responsible for taking adequate steps to ensure that assessment of students is valid, open, fair, and congruent with course objectives."

<http://www.tss.uoguelph.ca/STLHE/ethical.html>

Ethically questionable assessment practices include

- Testing skills that were not part of the announced objectives: the hidden curriculum
- Testing things not given adequate time or practice during the course
- Giving too few opportunities for assessment or giving the same types of assessment over again, e.g., always giving multiple choice tests which may not match every students' learning style
- Not testing according to how you taught, e.g., having an essay on the final exam if you have never asked the students to write an essay in that class
- Not allowing all students equal opportunity to demonstrate mastery

**Do you have a "hidden" curriculum?**

Many of our courses also include "hidden" skills that we do not teach, yet we expect students to acquire and we test them:

Group work

Oral presentation skills

Writing skills

Computer skills

What's yours?

**IS ASSESSMENT PART OF LEARNING IN YOUR CLASS?**

Assessment can be an important part of learning if it is timed appropriately, and if the comments are used to do more than justify grades you have given the students.

To make assessment more meaningful, consider what happens before, after and between assessments:

- Why are you conducting this assessment? What learning do you want to assess?
- How does the assessment fit into the course objectives?
- How much information have you given students about your expectations?

- How much guidance and feedback have they received so far?
- How much will you give them after the test?

“A single, episodic test of anything is an incomplete assessment. . . . A solitary test, with no interaction between the test taker and the assessor, will turn out to be as foolish, dimwitted and pre-modern as some of the practices involving rods and canes a hundred years ago.” (Wiggins, 1997)



#### BASIC RULES FOR ASSESSMENT

- Make sure students know and understand the assessment criteria and that the criteria are linked to the course objectives.
- Include more than test scores; for example, class participation and contribution, essays, in-class or lab assignments, tutorials, and so on.
- Grade students on their own achievements, not those of other students; in other words, grade them according to their own success in fulfilling the course objectives
- Schedule assessments within the semester in such a way that students (even—perhaps especially—in large classes) receive and can benefit from regular feedback.

Take a look at the following course outline with the assignments listed.

Clearly, this pattern does not allow for the best opportunity to assess learning: the first few weeks have no assessment at all and the major research paper is too close to the final exam, meaning the students won't have it back in time to learn from it—likely the paper will be returned at the final exam, and the students will barely bother to look

beyond their grade to read the teacher's comments.

Sample course schedule—a bit bottom heavy!

• 1	• 8 Midterm returned
• 2	• 9
• 3	• 10
• 4	• 11 Term paper (30%) Original Research
• 5	• 12
• 6 Midterm T/F & Short Answer (20%)	• 13 Final Exam: Essay questions (Term Paper returned)
• 7	

Think about the advantages and disadvantages of different assessment styles:

**Essays** allow for in-depth coverage of material; students can use a variety of responses and demonstrate learning at the higher cognitive levels of analysis, synthesis, and comparison. But essays are difficult and time-consuming to grade, and their evaluation *may* tend to be subjective.

**True-False** quizzes are fairly simple to develop; they allow you to ask a wide array of questions; and they are easy to score. On the negative side, they *do* encourage guessing, and are best for testing the lower levels of knowledge—memory and recall—rather than analysis or synthesis.

**Multiple Choice** tests measure the ability to **recognize** responses. They are easy to grade; however, good ones take a long time to develop, and these tests rely primarily upon recall and memory, and they encourage guessing.

#### ASSESSING EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

Dr. Angie Wong (1999) suggests that assessment is dependent upon two interrelated components: evidence of learning and the instrument that measures it.

The evidence must be sufficient to demonstrate that learning has occurred.

The evidence must be authentic; in other words, the evidence of learning presented must be honestly and verifiably the student's own.

The evidence must be current: presented at the appropriate time and at the appropriate level for the student's expected development.

The tool used to measure that learning is also important:

Is the tool valid: measuring what it is supposed to measure?

Is the tool reliable: measuring that learning consistently for various learners and assessors?

Is the tool fair: no one is disadvantaged through its use?

### CONCLUSION

Good assessment is aligned with the course objectives and the teaching that has taken place in class.

Comments that are clear to the student are more likely to be useful.

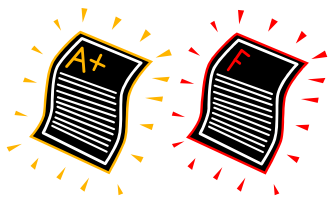
Good feedback is an essential part of assessment, and assessment is essential to learning.

### SUGGESTED RESOURCES

STLHE. (1996). *Ethical Principles in University Education*.

Wiggins, G. (1997). Feedback: How learning occurs. *AAHE Bulletin*, 50(3).

Wong, A.T. (1999). *Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition: A Guide for University Faculty and Administrators*. University of Saskatchewan, SK: University Extension Press.



## THE TEACHING INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

I am delighted to announce that the Purdy Crawford Teaching Centre has received a \$100,000 grant from the General Electric Company to establish a Teaching Internship Programme at Mount Allison.

There are many opportunities within this Internship Programme to foster an atmosphere of experiential learning and mentorship on campus—and perhaps to enrich the experience of students in large classes by engaging the help of a student Intern.

The Programme sees individual faculty members paired with a student intern who performs a variety of teaching duties in a particular class. Each faculty member will have only one Intern per semester.

The Internship is an excellent opportunity for the many Mount Allison students who go one to study Education, or who plan to pursue graduate studies.

Here are some brief details:

1. The supervising faculty member—the mentor—will select a teaching Intern based on that student's combined aptitude and potential for teaching. Faculty members may decide to choose the Intern by competition, by evaluation of proposals, etc.
2. Faculty mentors and students receive an Orientation session from the PCTC.
3. The student intern and the supervising faculty mentor create a learning contract at the beginning of the Internship. It outlines what each hopes the student will learn from the Internship. It underscores that the student should be involved in meaningful learning.

*The Internship is not just about what the student does, but about what she learns from what she does.*

4. During the Internship, the faculty mentor and the student meet regularly and there are monthly joint meetings of all mentors and students involved in the Programme, facilitated by PCTC.

5. Student Interns will document their learning in a portfolio.

#### **Value of the Portfolio**

*The portfolio allows the Intern to document and reflect upon individual success. Into that portfolio, the student can put materials she has created for the course, lesson plans, assignments, feedback from the teaching mentor, and feedback from the students in the class, self-reflection about how well she has fulfilled the learning objectives of the Internship.*

#### **A CAMPUS-WIDE OPPORTUNITY**

The Internship programme is an opportunity for teachers in *all* disciplines to mentor a promising student who has the potential to become a colleague in the future and to expose that student to a large array of teaching duties.

*I would like to acknowledge the work of Dr. Gary Tucker, who wrote the successful funding proposal for General Electric when he was Interim Director of the PCTC. Thanks, Gary!*

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN HEARING MORE ABOUT THIS INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME, PLEASE ATTEND ONE OF THE FOLLOWING BRIEF INFORMATION SESSIONS AT THE PCTC (RM. 205 BENNETT)**

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14<sup>TH</sup> AT 3:30 PM  
OR  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16<sup>TH</sup> AT 4 PM  
OR  
CALL EILEEN AT 364-2652  
(pctc@mta.ca)**

## **IMBALANCE: BEING ENTITLED TO ONLY THE BAD NEWS**

***MAI KUHA, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
BALL STATE UNIVERSITY***

Something unusual happened about halfway through the fall semester. A student e-mailed to let me know that she would miss a class . . . because she was going home to welcome a relative who was returning from Iraq. I was elated. Allison's relative is coming home from Iraq!

As I stopped to observe my happiness, I thought it seemed a little out of proportion, given that I don't know the student very well, and I certainly know nothing about her relative, not even whether this person is her parent, sibling, or cousin. I think the reason for my reaction was that it's so unusual to hear something like this.

Sometimes the department posts news of scholarships awarded, but I can remember only a handful of cases of students themselves telling me that something good had happened to them, in the 11 semesters since graduate school.



They do tell me their worst news, reasonably, since they want to have their absences excused or just to be courteous and tell me that they are missing class for a weighty reason, or maybe partly because they are looking for someone to listen. I've heard about three divorces, two broken engagements, a husband in jail, two unwanted pregnancies, siblings suddenly diagnosed with a fatal illness, best friends horribly injured in a car accident, a mentally ill mother going off her medication and disappearing, and, of course, countless cases of fresh grief over a death in the family, and of students themselves struggling with depression and other health problems.

On the other hand, *not* getting the specifics doesn't lighten the load much. One student mentioned early in the semester the stress of her father having serious health problems while she and her boyfriend were buying a house. Later she stopped attending class. I can connect those dots.

Two of the divorced students who took my undergraduate class have enrolled in our graduate program, so I see them around and notice that they look happy and well. This is also unusual--generally I don't get to find out whether things eventually turned out all right. News of personal tragedy tends to come more in the form of a drive-by shooting.

Now I'm realizing that all this has taken a toll on me over the years. It's not that I want deeper personal friendships with all 100 students every semester, and it's not that I feel responsible for "fixing" their problems. This imbalance of bad and good news just seems to be an inherent part of an appropriate student-teacher relationship.

Posted on the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Listerv ([STLHE-L@LISTSERV.UNB.CA](mailto:STLHE-L@LISTSERV.UNB.CA)) January 3, 2005. Reprinted with permission of the author.



Dr. Margo Husby Scheelar from University of Calgary responded to Mai. Here is part of her response, reprinted with permission:

*Some may say that we should be objective and distant so that we can offer institutional support while maintaining professional distance. That might work for accountants but not for teachers. We are interacting with the hearts, minds and souls of other human beings, walking on sacred ground every time we enter a classroom. In doing so, we risk encountering both pain and joy; the latter is delightful; the former is agonizing.*

*But in walking with those in pain we enter into the reality of human life and sharing that reality is awe-some in the deepest sense of the word. Like the Velveteen Rabbit, we risk having our fur rubbed off but, also like the Rabbit, we become real.*

### **HOW TO DEMORALIZE FACULTY**

By Howard B. Altman.

Reprinted from [The Journal of Academic Leadership](http://www.academicleadership.org/) Vol. II, No. III - Winter, 2002 (<http://www.academicleadership.org/>)

*"Faculty morale is too high," says Howard Altman in this satirical piece. He cautions university administrators to follow his foolproof plan or face a campus overburdened by contented teachers. Here are some of the measures essential to increase dissatisfaction and send morale plummeting:*

#### **Close down the lines of communication -**

Let the Administration Building be a "black hole" from which no responses are received, no communication heard.

**Never thank anyone** - Dedicated service should always be taken for granted and never acknowledged.

**Stay invisible** - Avoid being seen around campus; stay behind closed doors; postpone appointments.

#### **Keep the workings of the reward system**

**secret** - The more vague and unspecified standards there are for promotion, tenure, and merit, the easier it is to make personnel decisions.

**Change everything frequently** - Alter the reward system, introduce another teaching evaluation form, conduct frequent surveys (but don't share the results), and bring in new administrators every couple of years.

*The Journal of Academic Leadership is a thought-provoking resource for university administrators - and those who like to keep their eye on them!*



## ON BLUEBERRIES, QUALITY, AND EDUCATION



*But we can never send back our blueberries. It's not a business—it's a school!*

Award-winning blueberry ice cream changed Jamie Vollmer's views about education. The attorney and former president of the Great Midwestern Ice Cream Co, has given countless presentations to parents and teachers in the United States. All of this began accidentally: Fifteen years ago, when his blueberry ice cream was voted the best in the US, Jamie Vollmer was invited to start a business and education partnership in Iowa.

At one school, Vollmer sensed that the teachers in the auditorium were less than receptive to his message: "If I ran my business the way you operate your schools, I wouldn't be in business very long!"

In retrospect, Vollmer admits, the speech was a perfect balance—"equal parts ignorance and arrogance."

As soon as he had finished his diatribe, a woman's hand shot up, and he was in trouble:

*"We are told, Sir, that you manage a company that makes good ice cream."*

*"The best ice cream in America, ma'am," I smugly replied.*

*"How nice," she said. "Is it rich and smooth?"*

*"Sixteen percent butterfat," I crowed.*

*"Premium ingredients?"*

*"Super premium! Nothing but triple A." I was on a roll; I never saw the next line coming.*

*"Mr. Vollmer, when you are standing on your receiving dock and you see an inferior shipment of blueberries arrive, what do you do?"*

*In the silence of that room, I could hear the trap snap. I was dead meat, but I wasn't going to lie: "I send them back."*

*"That's right!" she barked. "But we can never send back our blueberries. We take them big, small, rich, poor, gifted, exceptional, abused, frightened, confident, homeless, rude, brilliant. We take them with ADHD, junior rheumatoid arthritis, and English as their second language. We take them all! Every one!*

*And that, Mr. Vollmer, is why it's not a business—It's a school!"*

*The whole audience jumped to their feet and yelled, "Yeah! Blueberries! Blueberries!"*

*And so began my long transformation.*

Jamie Vollmer's story has been quoted in many educational articles. You can read the whole thing for yourself at his web site:

[http://www.jamievollmer.com/blue\\_story.html](http://www.jamievollmer.com/blue_story.html)



The PCTC will miss the leadership of Dr. Michael Fox, his integrity and his commitment to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

**Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,  
'An honest man's the noblest work of God.'** (Robert Burns)

**DEAR COUNSELLOR**  
*CHRISTIANA MACDOUGALL-FLEMING,*  
*STUDENT LIFE*

Dear Counsellor:

I have a student in my class this term, who has been in several of my other classes. He is very intelligent and interested in the topics we cover. He always participates in class discussions with very insightful and provocative comments, and he does quite well on short assignments. However, this student is chronically late handing in term-papers, to the point where I am forced to deduct grades. This happens even if I grant an extension on the paper. The end result is that his final grade does not reflect his ability. I have tried speaking to the student, but he says he is just not good at organizing his time. I cannot help suspect there is more going on here. Do you have any ideas?

Dear Professor:

It is a cruel irony that the qualities that make you a good and challenging professor may be the same ones that contribute to this student's underachievement in your classes.

I often see students in my office who struggle with this problem, and very frequently the "handing in late" behaviour is most problematic in their favorite classes taught by their favorite professors. These students tend to be perfectionist and insecure. They are very impressed by your knowledge and passion for the subject and want to ensure that you think highly of them as well. The students cannot help notice that they know far less about the topic than you do, and while it may be irrational, they are embarrassed by this. They often feel that they can "fake it" in class discussions but when it comes to committing their thoughts and knowledge to paper, they are suddenly paralyzed by the fear that you will discover their fraud.

The following is a fictional account of what a student struggling with this problem might say in my office:



"I came to see you today because I am feeling very, very stupid. I have a paper for my class that is due today and I kept procrastinating on it until last night. This doesn't happen at all in my other classes or even with other assignments for this class.

Whenever I try to start working on this assignment, I see a scary image of my prof. She has high expectations, and I know my paper will not be good enough. I am even having dreams about my prof accusing me of not doing well enough in this course. You said it would be better if I talked to the prof and asked for feedback but I didn't, which is another reason why I am feeling really stupid right now. I am just too scared to talk to her. When I am in that seminar, I feel that I don't deserve to be there. I even feel a sense of guilt when I see her because I am not being a very serious student this semester. I am supposed to be pushing myself to study, but the more I think about it, the less productive I am on this paper. When I am stressed out in a situation like this I try to think, 'Just do as much as you can, and forget about the due date.' But when I start reading, I think about the prof and how I'm not the kind of student she expects."

So how can you as a professor help this student?

The challenging message of "work hard....I expect a lot from you" is appropriate in the classroom as it will inspire some students, but it will also immobilize others. Because of this, it is important to temper this message with acceptance.

For example, it may be helpful for the students who struggle with insecurity to share with them some of your own academic struggles: your experiences with having an article or conference paper rejected, being turned down for a teaching position, getting a C- in your elective in first year.

These experiences all contributed to making you an academic success—your students' similar experiences are also fuel for their growth.

To contact one of the Mount Allison Counsellors, call Student Life at 364-2255.

If you have a question for this column, please e-mail it to [pctc@mta.ca](mailto:pctc@mta.ca).



### **NEW ON THE BOOKSHELVES**

You are welcome to visit the Centre to peruse these new books, available for browsing or borrowing (for a limited time):

**Balancing Acts: The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Academic Careers** (Mary Taylor Huber).

**Disciplinary Styles in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Exploring Common Ground** (Mary Taylor Huber & Sherwyn Morreale).

**Teaching College in an Age of Accountability** (Lyons, McIntosh & Kysilka).

*The following may also be useful . . .*  
**The Search Committee Handbook: A Guide to Recruiting Administrators** (American Association for Higher Education)

### **PCTC NEWS**

The PCTC has moved to Room 205, Bennett Building, just one floor up from the former location. I am very grateful to Helmut Becker and the Computing Services staff for facilitating this move to give me private office space. Toni Roberts, the Educational Technology Consultant, is now in Room 212 Bennett.

Congratulations to the following who received funding from the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning grants (and to Members of the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning who braved a blizzard for the meeting!):

**Wendy Burnett** (MLL): *The Linguistic Atlas of Atlantic Canada, Volume VII*

**Marie Hammond Callaghan** (Women's Studies): *Student Conference on Archival Research in Canadian Women's Studies*

**Pravin Varma** (Physics): *Videotaping Physics Demonstrations*

### **CONTRIBUTE TO PAIDEIA**

The PCTC supports and encourages the scholarship of teaching and learning. A key component of scholarship is "going public": presenting our scholarly work at conferences, workshops, faculty colloquia; writing for journals, posting our findings on websites or listservs, and otherwise engaging in debate or discussion. I want this newly named newsletter to contain such lively interchange among teaching scholars at Mount Allison.

I invite you to contribute your reflective pieces on teaching; descriptions of your innovations in the classroom and how they worked; your reactions to other articles you've read; reviews of recent books or articles on teaching and learning.

Contact Eileen at [pctc@mta.ca](mailto:pctc@mta.ca) for more information.

# THE J.E.A. CRAKE TEACHING AWARD (ARTS) CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The J.E.A. Crake Teaching Award, established by the J.E.A. Crake Foundation, is intended to encourage and recognize good teaching within the Faculty of Arts\* at Mount Allison University. The award is made annually to a full-time faculty member at Mount Allison judged to demonstrate outstanding teaching.

## CRITERIA

The criteria which will be considered include

- evidence of excellent teaching, and
- the quality of contributions to the scholarship of teaching

## NOMINATION

Nominations, including self-nominations, are invited from any member of the university community, including students.

To nominate a faculty member, you should do the following:

- check with your nominee to ensure that she or he accepts your nomination and is willing to take part in assembling the supporting dossier
- write a letter, addressed to the Dean of Arts, in which you provide the reasons why the nominee merits this award

There is no limit on the number of times an individual may be nominated.

The J.E.A. Crake Teaching Award is the only teaching award exclusive to the Faculty of Arts. The recipient will receive an award in the amount of \$2,000.00, half of which is to be used on a teaching project of the award holder's design. The teaching project should be undertaken the year following the presentation of the award.

**Nominations should be submitted by Monday, February 21, to:**

**J.E.A. Crake Teaching Award Nomination  
Ms. Jennifer Kenny, Office of the Dean of Arts  
Centennial Hall, Mount Allison University  
65 York Street, Sackville, N.B. E4L 1E 4**

**For more information, please e-mail:  
jbkenny@mta.ca**

\*The following departments and programs are in the Faculty of Arts at Mount Allison University: Canadian Studies, Classics, Drama, English, Fine Arts, History, Modern Languages and Literatures, Music, Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Women's Studies.



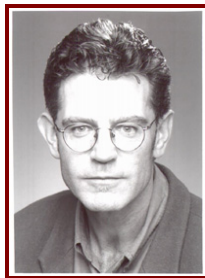
## TWO SPECIAL PCTC EVENTS IN MARCH

### CHALLENGING HOMOPHOBIA IN SCHOOLS: A PUBLIC FORUM

THURSDAY, MARCH 3<sup>RD</sup>, 7 PM  
OWENS ART GALLERY

What does opposition to the cartoon character Sponge Bob Square Pants and the suicides of two 16 year old boys have to do with the controversy about New Brunswick's proposed new sex education school curriculum? Why does homophobia continue to be an all too frequent factor in the lives of LGBTTQ citizens, particularly the young? Schools and post-secondary institutions remain sites of "the pain of severe insult" as Didier Eribon (2004) describes it. Most bullying in schools carries with it abuse of and assaults on a student's sexuality, often with tragic results.

In this public forum, James McNinch will explore some of the challenges facing educators as they struggle both to meet the needs of all students and to accommodate religious and social anxiety about sexual differences. Based on recent research conducted in a grade 10 Social Studies classroom, a grade 9 Health class, and a university class on schooling and sexual identities, James points to some strategies being used today to combat homophobia, and he will invite participants to share their own concerns and experiences.



JAMES MCNINCH

### CONCEPTUALIZING LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

FRIDAY, MARCH 4<sup>TH</sup>, 3:15 PM  
DUNN 108

Most of the literature in the field of teaching and learning in higher education presumes to know what learning is. This session stems from a failed attempt to use discourse analysis to identify how teachers and students conceptualize learning. What I uncovered was merely descriptions of students' "study habits" and need for "support" and of teachers' "actions" and "behaviours". This led me to broaden my question to ask more generally how we conceptualize learning. Participants will be invited to engage in exercises designed to stimulate discussion of what learning is from the perspectives of the teacher, the curriculum, and the students by looking at core values, teaching objectives, and student assessment as three ways to understand some of our assumptions about learning.

**DR. JAMES MCNINCH** is an Associate Professor with the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina, and the Director of the university's Teaching Development Centre. He developed and teaches a course on Schooling and Sexual Identities. James was the editor and contributor to a recently published anthology, short-listed for a Saskatchewan Book Award: *I Could Not Speak My Heart: Education and Social Justice for Gay and Lesbian Youth* (2004). James's research interests include the use and misuse of student evaluations of teaching in faculty assessment. He is currently a visiting scholar with the Centre for Learning and Teaching at Dalhousie University.