

Insights & Ideas

for Teaching and Learning

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Teaching and Learning Committee

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from the editor of
Insights & Ideas

The spring 1990 edition of *Insights & Ideas for Teaching and Learning* includes three more topics related to post-secondary education. Frank Lepkowski reminds us how very useful the new on-line card catalog can be, Joyce Eckart details a practical system for grading group projects, and I've provided some thoughts on using student journals in diverse classes.

Last issue's article on "The Syllabus" excited some controversy. Like all items in *Insights & Ideas*, "The Syllabus" was intended as "food for thought" rather than as a directive, legal or institutional. I appreciate this opportunity to clarify the newsletter's purpose.

--Walli Andersen, editor

Using LUIS

LUIS, Kresge Library's new online catalog, has several capabilities which make it a considerable improvement over the old card catalog. Among them are:

·LUIS includes not only OU holdings but Wayne State, Detroit Public Library, University of Detroit, and several other area li-

braries' collections, multiplying users' access beyond materials held in Kresge Library. Materials are easily obtained through interlibrary loans.

·LUIS lists books, periodicals and (soon) government documents. When government documents are on line, all of Kresge Library's collections will be accessible from one source. In the past, three separate catalogs have been necessary to access these collections.

·The LUIS record indicates whether a book is checked out or not, increasing users' success going from catalog to collection. No time is wasted looking for books checked out to others.

·LUIS is accessible through MERIT or WSUnet. With a micro, a modem, and appropriate communications software, users can search LUIS from offices, homes, or computer workstations. You can get a guide to searching LUIS on a home computer, "Remote Access to LUIS via MERIT and WSUnet," at the Kresge Library Information Desk.

For help with LUIS, ask at the Kresge Library Information Desk (370-2471).

--Frank Lepkowski

Scoring Group Projects

Assigning individual grades on group projects is difficult for the instructor. While an instructor might assume that individual members are equalizing the efforts in doing the task, this is often not the case. At different times during the term, students find themselves unable to contribute equally to an effort and sometimes other members of the group feel that they are being taken advantage of.

One of my objectives for some classes is having students work together in cooperative groups. Therefore I have modified some scoring strategies to meet the needs of cooperative group projects. The system takes into account the fact that some participants do not put as much effort into group projects and others must do a significant amount of their work.

Each project receives one grade. Group participants negotiate among themselves for their individual effort grades before handing in the project. All group members must sign a negotiated percentage listing, which is turned in with the project.

Editorial Information

Insights & Ideas for Teaching & Learning is published twice a year, in the spring and fall, by the Oakland University Faculty Senate Teaching and Learning Committee, Office of the Provost, Oakland University, Rochester, MI 48309-4401. The newsletter is distributed free of charge to Oakland University faculty. Send all letters, news, and requests for additional copies to the above address.

For example, suppose Group 1 has five members. I set the allowable range of possible percentages at 90-110. The negotiated percentage form for effort has: Alice 92%, Bob 95%, Carl 100%, Dan 106%, Ellen 107%. The total is 500%; divided by 5, this equals 100% each for the whole project. In computing grades, then, Alice receives .92 times the project score as her individual grade on the group project, Bob .95 times the project score, and so forth.

—Joyce A. Eckart

Student Journals across the Curriculum

Teachers looking to improve student learning and course participation might consider implementing a "focused journal" as part of their course structure, in disciplines ranging from reading-based humanities to mathematics and the physical sciences.

Such journals may or may not be read by the teacher, but are never evaluated for the quality of the writing. A journal is, by definition, informal writing intended primarily for the writer's eye rather than an external audience. A teacher reviewing the journals would look for the students' understanding of course ideas and/or the number and depth of entries. In many cases, the purpose of the journal may be met without the instructor's ever collecting the writing.

Teachers might assign a small part of the course grade for the journal, based on number or extent of entries, with evaluation by rapid skimming and occasional marginalia. Some journal advocates, however, suggest that journals not

be collected, but regarded as students' private "diaries."

Journals can help:

•make students "autonomous learners," instead of "waiting dependently on the teacher to give them the rule" (McMillen 19).

•improve class discussion. Students can prepare either out-of-class or in-class journal entries on the day's topic; also, as issues arise in class, a pause for a few minutes of journal writing helps students think and develop positions. Since all students write, each gains from the discussion (Elbow 235).

•make course content more meaningful to the individual student. Strategies include "keep[ing] a running account of" the course issues (Mayher, Lester, and Pradl 82);

Nominations Due for Student, Faculty Awards

Do you know of extraordinary undergraduate performance beyond that for good grades? You can nominate an undergraduate for such achievements as exceptional reports, creations, or performances. Successful nominees receive a citation and \$500 at Fall commencement.

Send nomination letter and preliminary documentation of achievement to Geoff Brieger, Chemistry.

REMINDER: Nominations for the annual Teaching Excellence Awards may be sent to Ron Rapin, Modern Languages, through **March 31, 1990**.

The letter of nomination should contain sufficient supporting statements to permit an initial review of the nominee. Four awards of \$2,500 will be made at the Fall 1990 commencement.

using "double-entry journals" where students summarize readings on one notebook page and comment on the facing page (McMillen 20); writing for the final few minutes of

News from the Teaching & Learning Committee

The 1989-90 Teaching and Learning Committee activities included awarding \$5,337 for a total of six Educational Development Fund grants, sponsoring five small-group faculty lunches, and planning for the Teaching Excellence Awards, which have been expanded from one OU Foundation \$1,000 stipend to four \$2,500 State of Michigan awards.

Special thanks to the Teaching Excellence Award winners who spoke about their teaching at the faculty lunches: Shelley Appleton, Political Science/Assoc. Provost (1982); Virginia Blankenship, Psychology (1988); Bob Eberwein, English (1987); Bob Facko, Music (1986); Carl Osthaus, History (1989); Rich Stamps, Anthropology (1986).

Looking ahead to next year, EDF grant proposals will be due in November. We solicit your help in planning for next year's lunches: please return the questionnaire on the back of the newsletter as soon as possible. We are also exploring ways to increase on-campus resources about post-secondary teaching, including a one-day, on-campus symposium for Oakland faculty and a resource section in the SHES Resource Center.

The committee also welcomes suggestions for activities and materials for this newsletter. Send ideas to Howard Schwartz, SBA.

the period, so the student assimilates and organizes class material (Elbow 235).

•facilitate conferences. The students bring the journals, which may contain records of problems or questions, to focus the meeting.

•clarify course goals. At the beginning, record expectations, needs, strengths related to the course (Elbow 236); at the end, do self- and teacher evaluation (238).

•provide a sense of continuity for course materials, a course "notebook" other than a frantic attempt to record lecture notes.

Instructors should give student basic journal guidelines: entries are dated; the record should be kept in a permanent, separate notebook (spiral bound is good);

entries are generally handwritten; entries should be in-depth, evaluative discussions rather than "tally sheet" records; and entries are not evaluated for grammatical and mechanical conventions.

Journals are, finally, a way of implementing Writing Across the Curriculum without asking that the teacher teach writing.

Resources: Elbow, Peter. "Teaching Writing by Not Paying Attention to Writing." *Eforum*. Ed. Patricia L. Stock. Upper Montclair: Boynton, 1983. 23-40. Mayher, John S., Nancy Lester, and Gordon M. Pradl. *Learning to Write/Writing to Learn*. Upper Montclair: Boynton, 1983. McMillen, Liz. "Science and Math Professors are Assigning Writing Drills to Focus Students' Thinking." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 22 Jan. 1986: 19-20.

--Walli Andersen

We're Planning Ahead!

Help the Teaching and Learning Committee plan next year's small-group faculty lunches. Below is a selected list of IDEA papers from Kansas State University's Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development. For the 1990-91 lunches, we'd like to order some of these resource materials and focus the meetings with an in-house expert who can talk briefly about the topic and serve as a resource for the discussion.

please cut off and return:

Check up to seven topics that interest you:

- Motivating Students
- Improving Lectures
- Improving Discussions
- Improving Multiple-Choice Tests
- Student Ratings of Teacher Effectiveness
- Using Simulation Games in the College Classroom
- Questioning in the College Classroom
- Teaching Decision-Making with Guided Design
- Growth Contracting for Faculty Development
- Matching Instructional Objectives, Subject Matter, Tests, and Score Interpretation
- Defining and Evaluating College Teaching
- The Feedback Lecture
- Improving Essay Tests
- Improving College Grading

Could you serve as an in-house resource? **yes / no**

On which topic(s)? _____

Name _____ Campus Address _____

Please return by **Wednesday, April 18**, to Dyanne Tracy, SHES, 502 ODH.