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Innovations for the Large Lecture Gabrielle Fennmore



Gabrielle Fennmore is a Visiting Faculty member in the Department of Art. She is originally from Cincinnati, Ohio and holds a Ph.D. in Art Education from Ohio State University. She has enjoyed teaching in both university and public school settings. Her favorite area of interest is working with artists and communities. She has worked for programs such as Americorp, the Baker-Hunt Foundation, and a variety of community arts programs.

Somehow over the course of my teaching career, I had avoided instructing the dreaded large lecture class. For me, the large lecture class is one in which there are 300+ students in an amphitheater setting. Looking back at the environments in which I previously held Art History or Art Appreciation courses, I couldn't recall ever having more than 25 students per class. So when I was asked to teach a large lecture course here at UCF in the Art Department, I wasn't sure what to expect.

As I began my preparatory work for the course, I found myself doing all the content work one would do for students in a smaller classroom setting. I had been trained

in Art Education to construct a course from a problem-based, or inquiry-based approach—but how was I to accomplish this with such an enormous class size? And there was also no teaching assistant assigned to the course—it was just me. I began to feel inadequate and unprepared for what lay ahead.

I decided to visit the classroom space and made an appointment with the multimedia coordinator as it is a smart classroom. Armed with my course content in various forms of presenta-

tion, such as slides, PowerPoint and CD-Rom image banks, I was determined to fully utilize what technology was available to assist me in that room. That room! What I was not fully prepared for was the day that I walked into what seemed like the Roman Hippodrome. Out of horror I found myself picturing the scene in the movie *Gladiator*, where Russell Crowe stands screaming to a frenzied mob, "Are you not entertained!!" as the coliseum backdrop whirls around him. The multimedia coordinator chatted on about how to best operate the console as I stared out into hundreds of dimly lit empty seats.

Because I am a visual artist, it took the impact of actually seeing all those empty seats in that room for me to realize that my entire approach to course design needed to change for this particular class. I poured through resources aimed at instruction and classroom management. Most research I found discussed strategies for teaching large lecture courses from the perspective of offering suggestions on how to improve your lecturing. The idea behind this was that large lecture classes were somehow only good for transmitting large amounts of knowledge, cumulated from different sources, in one direction. Some offered limited suggestions for class activities that encouraged "active classroom thinking," and others simply negated

the idea of lecturing all together, citing it as an outdated mode of teaching. But nowhere could I find research that told me how to run a large

lecture class without the aid of online technology that encouraged or invited a problem-based, and/or inquiry-based mode of learning. The contention seemed to be that with the size of the class, it was somehow impossible or impractical to do this. I begrudgingly began to agree with some of this thinking as I understood that the evaluation and assessment criteria that comes with the application of those teaching methods in this situation could not

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serve students in the best way. In fact, the quality of intimate interaction that is required of problem-based and inquiry-based learning, I felt, would ultimately become diminished or watered-down in this large scale environment.

I began to look at how distance learning courses measured success. It seemed reasonable to me to associate 300+ students sitting in an auditorium doing activities, with 300+ students participating in an online course, but whom the instructor may never see. Distance learning courses allow for large scale enrollment because the technology (such as WebCT or Blackboard) is used as the classroom management tool. In my situation, the fact that the technology could handle the “grunt” work for large enrollment was key. With technology doing the bulk of the management work, such as keeping attendance, quizzes, grading, article posting, syllabus/handout distribution, mid-term/final distribution, etc., the instructor is more free to focus on content.

I wanted to combine my active classroom teaching methods with the use of this classroom management technology so that I could focus on content and spend more time creating meaningful, structured activities for students. I imagined the course in the form of a hybrid, where diverse class activities could now be divided and managed successfully throughout the week: traditional lecture days, online activities and readings, and study groups or recitation periods. For example, weekly, students could attend a large lecture day in which they would gather and collect information on the week’s topic. The information presented at the lecture would then be needed to complete online activities, readings, or discussions for the next period. Students would also be required to attend recitation or study group sessions to interact with each other and to review and share the week’s project or information.

In restructuring my course under this hybrid philosophy, I identified four areas of course development that would need to occur: student support, instructor support, content support, and long-term course goals. Innovations in these specific areas are not only tied to me, the instructor, but also to my department for future commitments and investments in furthering the quality of the course. Writing this summary, I felt that these types of innovations should have already been introduced to the course some time ago; many other large lecture courses across campus have already initiated similar developments. But I suspect there are still others somewhere out there on campus teaching the large lecture, who like myself are struggling with similar problems. By sharing some of my experience and structural ideas, I wanted to encourage others in similar positions to begin to reassess their course in stages.

“The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility.” - Albert Einstein

Varying the Context of Class Discussions: A Strategy for Active Learning?

Kerstin Hamann



Kerstin Hamann is Associate Professor in Political Science. In addition to her primary research area in Spanish politics and comparative industrial relations, she has conducted research and published numerous articles and conference papers on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. She has served as a CAS Faculty Fellow and also as a Senior Faculty Fellow at the

FCTL, and she has won several teaching awards at UCF. She is a member of the executive board of the Undergraduate Teaching section of the American Political Science Association and serves on the editorial board of a national Scholarship of Teaching and Learning journal, the *Journal of Political Science Education*.

I am constantly looking for ideas to improve all my courses. In my mind, even the courses that I have taught several times and the ones that receive good course evaluations can always be further refined. It is not just the content that needs updated, so I keep telling myself, but also the way the content is delivered—in other words, how I teach the course. In some cases, the need for revising course delivery methods is obvious. This was the case with an upper-level political theory course I recently revised. When I first taught the course a few years ago—actually, about 10 years ago—it enrolled about 15 students and was taught in a small conference room with an even smaller whiteboard and not much else. The next year, about 30 students enrolled in the class. After not having taught it for a number of years, I now find myself in front of 75 students in a multi-media classroom. I realized fairly quickly that the mixture of lecture and seminar-style discussion, informed by the assigned class readings, was not going to work with 75 students, or at least not the way it used to work. Therefore, I needed to rethink the way I was going to deliver the course material. While the lecture part was easy to adjust and supplement with PowerPoint slides and other visual aids, the discussion and critical thinking parts were somewhat more challenging to modify to the larger classroom setting.

For this particular class, discussion constitutes an important element of the instruction. But how to engage 75 students in discussions that critically analyze political theory texts, apply ideas to new contexts, and make connections between readings? How can one prevent individual students from taking over and dominating the discussion while the majority of the students sits there silently, wondering what the few are talking about? To minimize this situation, I have devised several ways in which students can engage in meaningful discussions. Sometimes, I divide the class up into small groups that discuss different readings or questions, and then report back to the class. Some discussions take place in small online groups. And some discussions take place with the entire class,

allowing students to choose whether or not they want to get engaged in the discussion. That way, I hope, everyone has a chance to participate, and hopefully there will be a discussion environment for everyone to contribute comfortably.

However, the question is, how do I know that the course redesign will achieve the goals I have for the class? Just because I think that this will work does not mean that it actually does work from the students' perspective. This is where the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) comes in: assessing the impact of what we do in our classrooms. Innovating my courses is fine, but I also need to make sure that the innovations do what they are supposed to do—improving the learning experience. In this case, this means to enhance active learning through discussion.

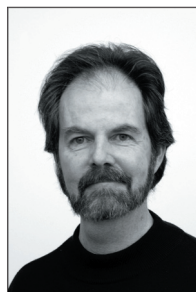
My previous SoTL work, done in collaboration with two of my colleagues, Dr. Hutch Pollock and Dr. Bruce Wilson, has concentrated on assessing and devising active learning strategies in online classes, and has focused on online discussion groups. The results of that research have demonstrated the utility of online discussion groups in fostering a gender-neutral, student-friendly environment that encouraged and enhanced student-to-student discussion. It has also revealed the importance of gender composition in online discussion groups; all female groups are less likely to have meaningful, in-depth discussions than are mixed gender groups. In this current project, I am extending some of this research to active learning through discussion in my face-to-face classes. Once I have used the assignments and assessment tools I developed in my course innovation project in future semesters, I hope the results will help me create a learning environment where all students are encouraged to enhance their critical thinking skill, and feel comfortable to participate in discussions in at least one format, if not all. But I won't know that my strategy of varying the context of discussions is providing the desired outcome until I have assessed it. Until then, I just build on the existing literature and my experience and hope that I am addressing the needs of my students.

"...Reflective thinking is always more or less troublesome because it involves overcoming the inertia that inclines one to accept suggestions at their face value; it involves willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance. Reflective thinking, in short, means judgment suspended during further inquiry; and suspense is likely to be somewhat painful."

John Dewey

Blended Student Groups: Managing Students With Diverse Academic and Professional Backgrounds in the Small to Moderate Size Class

L. Timothy Worrell



Tim Worrell is an Associate Professor in the Department of Health Professions and this year's Faculty Fellow at the Faculty Center. He joined the faculty on a part-time basis in 1973 and became a full-time faculty member in 1976. His clinical specialties include invasive and non-invasive cardiopulmonary diagnostics.

Many professors deal with student groups that come to the university with quite diverse academic and professional backgrounds. Unlike the "traditional" college class comprised of 18-19 year old freshmen, 19-20 year old sophomores, etc., some classes may be comprised of some of these traditional students as well as older adult learners who have previous professional and life experiences. Examples of this can be found in the various limited access clinical programs found in the College of Health and Public Affairs here at UCF. One such program is the Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) Transfer program which was developed to track credentialed practitioners with Associate of Science degrees in Respiratory Therapy into the B. S. program in Cardiopulmonary Sciences. These RRT-Transfer students come to our program with anywhere from 2-20+ years of clinical experience. They enter the undergraduate program as seniors and are "blended" in with our traditional students who have been here since entering as freshmen. As a result of this blending, interesting group dynamics develop which may create either frustrations or opportunities for the professor not encountered in a more traditional college class with a more homogeneous makeup.

The first thing that must be understood is that there are certain "givens" associated with this type of class makeup. These givens are as follows:

1. There is a wide range of academic and professional experiences in these student groups. Some students may have virtually no "real world" experience while others may have anywhere from 2-20 years of experience. Some have only completed traditional general education requirements, while others may have completed a community college professional training program in addition to their general education requirements.
2. These students have diverse learning styles.
3. These students have diverse life management skill sets (time and stress management skills). Often the students with real world experience are older and more mature than the traditional students.

Once these givens are understood, a variety of techniques can be utilized to enhance the learning environment for these stu-

dents. As with all classes, these students require a game plan for the course. A well organized course syllabus should provide this necessary information. The professor should ensure that all essential information concerning the course is included in the syllabus including the mode of instruction, meeting times, text books, exam schedule, grading policy, academic dishonesty policy, etc. This is the contract between the faculty member and the student for the course, and it is essential that the contract be as clear as possible. This can prevent many problems as the course progresses throughout the semester.

Students need to feel they have an identity in the course. Within the size limitations of the class, the professor should make every attempt to get to know all the students enrolled. For that, eCommunity can be an invaluable tool in assisting the professor in connecting a face to a name. This tool is very helpful in making initial contacts with all of the students in the class and for all subsequent contacts during the semester. An initial assignment requiring the students to introduce themselves with a short biographical sketch will provide a much better appreciation of the diversity found within these blended groups of students. The professor should add his/her own short biographical sketch (not their professional curriculum vita) so the students have a better understanding of the faculty member's academic and professional background. Many times students will question why a certain faculty member is teaching a particular course, and this biographical sketch can answer this question nicely. Once the semester begins, eCommunity can be used throughout the term for communicating course issues as well as a means of sending short notes of encouragement to students who are doing their best to understand difficult course materials. These quick notes can have a very positive influence on the individual student as well as the group as a whole.

A number of interesting teaching scenarios may be encountered when teaching student groups that have this blended characteristic. The students with more extensive professional backgrounds may be paired with the students who are less experienced and have more traditional college backgrounds to create an in-class mentoring system that both groups will find helpful. The students with more extensive professional backgrounds bring real world experience to the classroom which can be invaluable, especially in clinically based programs where patient care scenarios and problem-solving exercises are being utilized. As with most mentoring systems, a tremendous amount of give and take will occur, benefitting both the experienced and less experienced students in the class.

Seating in the classroom may present an interesting challenge to the instructor. Frequently, students in these blended groups will gravitate toward other students with similar academic and professional backgrounds, creating a natural dividing line within the classroom. The instructor may choose to allow a natural division to occur so that the students with the more extensive professional backgrounds are on one side of the room

and the more traditional students are on the other side; or, the instructor may choose to arrange the class seating so that there is a more even distribution of the two different groups throughout the room. Both scenarios can produce interesting class dynamics. An alternative to this is to allow for the natural division to occur at the beginning of the semester and then rearrange the class after the mid-term to allow for more even distribution. It all depends on what type of interaction the professor is trying to achieve.

In dealing with these blended student groups, it is essential that the students with more real world experience and the students with very little or no real world experience respect one another. Both groups have something to offer the class as a whole. There is a tendency for the more experienced students to dominate the classroom discussions and all efforts should be made by the professor to prevent this as much as possible. When assigning group activities, all efforts should be made to ensure an even distribution of group leaders who represent both categories of students.

"As with most mentoring systems, a tremendous amount of "give and take" will occur, benefitting both the experienced and less experienced students in the class."

The unique nature of the dynamics of the classroom in any course is often the main force that determines the identity of the class. It is one of the continually changing variables in any class no matter how many times the professor teaches the course, and often it is what keeps the teaching and learning experience fresh for both the professor and the students. Teaching blended student groups makes this an even more rewarding experience for the professor.

Reinventing the Wheel: Developing an Empirical Research Methods Course

Beth Rapp Young



Beth Rapp Young is an Assistant Professor of English and director of the University Writing Center at UCF. She has been involved with writing centers and WID initiatives since 1986.

Grad students studying literature usually don't need to know much about empirical research methods, so our department's research methods course has focused mostly on library research, bibliography, and an introduction to the profession of English. With the growth of M.A. programs in Rhetoric and Composition, Professional Writing, and Technical Communication, however, increasing numbers of students need to be familiar with empirical research. They may not carry out their own empirical study, but they certainly will read empirical studies and they need to understand how such

studies are carried out. My project, therefore, was to expand the graduate research methods course, ENG 5009 Methods of Bibliography and Research, to include empirical research methods.

Since so many other disciplines have long-standing empirical research methods courses, I wanted to avoid reinventing the wheel. At the same time, I wanted the empirical material to become an organic part of the course rather than a tacked-on appendage. The transformation of this course is in line with similar changes in graduate programs at other universities (e.g., Page).

In this article, I'll first describe some of the online resources that have been useful for my course (an M course) and might be useful to other faculty. Next, I'll talk about how the empirical concepts can be a coherent part of a humanities course.

Maricopa Online Tutorial on Scientific Research Methods
<http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/proj/res_meth/login.html>

This site introduces five research methods (Experimental, Correlation, Natural Observation, Survey, Case Study) using examples from varied science and social science disciplines (anthropology, psychology, sociology, geology, and biology). A tutorial helps students assess their knowledge of the strengths and limitations of each method.

Athabasca University Online Tutorial on Threats to Internal Validity
<<http://psych.athabascau.ca/html/Validity>>

This site explains nine threats to internal validity, providing examples from hypothetical experiments. A follow-up tutorial asks students to classify 36 hypothetical experiments as internally valid or not; if not, students must identify the specific threat to internal validity. The tutorial links to "related sources" that provide more information about the subject matter of the experiments.

Denver University Web site about Visualizing Statistical Concepts
<<http://www.du.edu/psychology/methods/concepts/index.htm>>

This site provides computer graphics designed to help students understand statistical concepts such as bivariate relationships and sampling distributions.

Research Methods Knowledge Base
<<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb>>

The Research Methods Knowledge Base, developed by a professor of policy analysis and management at Cornell University, is a comprehensive web-based textbook that addresses all of the topics in a typical introductory undergraduate or graduate course in social research methods. It covers the entire research process as well as the major theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of research (e.g., ethics).

Online Tutorial on Variables and Hypotheses

<<http://depts.clackamas.edu/socsci/faculty/grossmann/variables.html>>

This online tutorial, developed by a faculty member at Clackamas Community College in Oregon, introduces the basic concepts of variables, hypotheses, and the difference between correlation and causation.

This material is not as difficult to integrate as it might seem for two reasons:

1. Most English M.A. students are or will be teachers, and every teacher needs to know how to formulate and test hypotheses (to assess the success of a pedagogy, if nothing else). Furthermore, the subfields represented in our department (Rhetoric and Composition, Technical Communication, etc.) are as closely allied to the social sciences as they are to the humanities. I assigned student groups to locate published empirical research that related to their subfield and that used the different empirical methods we were studying. Because the undergraduate experience with English Studies is primarily literature courses, many students were surprised at how often scholars in English Studies conduct empirical research.

2. English is an evidence-based discipline. Humanities scholars need to plan their research methods in advance, to carry

"...sometimes inexperienced students will go to the nearest library and search for only those web sites that agree with their pre-existing beliefs—but that research method would not be valid, and an understanding of the scientific method can help explain why."

out their research systematically, and to present their findings in a manner that allows others to determine whether their conclusions are warranted; although, English students may be unused to thinking about their work in those terms. For example, sometimes inexperienced students will go to the nearest library and search for only those

web sites that agree with their pre-existing beliefs—but that research method would not be valid, and an understanding of the scientific method can help explain why. Moreover, library research benefits from an examination of method, as research specialists such as Thomas Mann have pointed out. By attending to their research methods, students are better able to determine whether they have accomplished their library research goals.

Ultimately, I hope that incorporating social science empirical methods into the humanities course can become a mechanism for community within our graduate program by helping students learn how different research orientations can illuminate different aspects of a discipline.

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Interdisciplinarity, Activism and Assessment: Complementary or Contradictory?

Lisa Logan, Terri Fine, and Leandra Preston



Lisa Logan is Associate Professor of English and, since August 2002, Director of the Women's Studies Program in CAS. Her research interests include early American women's popular fiction and personal narratives of travel, captivity, domestic abuse, and crime, and she has also published and given workshops on feminist pedagogy. Terri Fine is Associate Professor of Political Science. Her interests focus on American politics with an emphasis on women and politics, political parties and public opinion. Leandra Preston is the first ever full-time Visiting Instructor in Women's Studies. Her research interests include theories of activism, third-wave feminist theory, and Italian-American women's writing.

Grass-roots organizing for change and the measurement of student and program outcomes seem strange bedfellows. Yet we will try to convince you that activism and assessment complement one another perfectly in an interdisciplinary program. Sure, the former conjures up images of blue-jean wearing, sign-carrying, sixties-style action; and the latter must be what blue-suited folks perform in offices. But in interdisciplinary programs, we wear many hats.

If you've felt your department squeezed as legislatures offer less support, university budgets shrink, and departments place higher demands on their tenure-line faculty, a quick visit to an interdisciplinary program can make you feel better, if only to say, "At least I'm not there!" One big challenge facing interdisciplinary programs across the country is a dearth of regular faculty. As universities tighten their belts, fewer department chairs are willing to share faculty less often. Without regular and permanent faculty of their own, interdisciplinary programs must plan creatively for their core courses so that student needs and standards of excellence are foremost and colleges and universities continue to recognize the value of interdisciplinary work.

Case in point: students matriculating in the Women's Studies Program's interdisciplinary undergraduate minor must take the required core course, WST 3015: Introduction to Women's Studies, a university service-learning course. With only

one permanent faculty member and 10-12 sections needed per year, this highly interactive interdisciplinary course, taught by instructors from a range of disciplines, succeeds because of the program's dual commitments to activism and assessment.

As a survey course, Introduction to Women's Studies covers a broad scope of issues in weekly interdisciplinary units. Obviously, instructors have different training and background. Through assessment strategies, Women's Studies has strengthened its interdisciplinary and activist approaches. For example, to build their syllabi, new and seasoned instructors can access a WebCT account that delineates clear and consistent goals and objectives that work across disciplines and that are vital to the Women's Studies program's goals and mission.

One important course goal is that students gain knowledge and experience about women's and gender issues—that theory is integrated into critical practice. To that end, the site houses how-to guides for running activism projects, including benefit shows and The Clothesline Project, a list of community partners in Brevard and Orlando, and specific assignments for the course and modules for each unit from which instructors can draw as they build their own syllabi. A sample assignment introduces students to feminist activism through assigned texts and a list of feminist organization web sites. After completing the readings and discussion, students visit at least three web sites from the list provided, select one web site, and construct a fact sheet about that organization, including opportunities for activism. These fact sheets then become part of the course materials for instructors and students, posted in WebCT for use throughout the duration of the course.

Another module helps students (and instructors) to understand a social scientific approach. One key element in this module is the disciplinary claim that single events, whether on the individual, group or mass level, rarely occur because of one other event. This means that explaining women's place in society, whether it be from a psychological, sociological, economic or political perspective is, by definition interdisciplinary. Service learning provides excellent methods for learning about and addressing certain social problems.

For example, the United States elections system is, save for presidential elections, funded through private monies. These private funds may come from individuals, the candidates themselves, or organizations

called Political Action Committees. When students develop an understanding of how women's and money issues are intertwined in the public and government (for instance, those jobs that primarily employ women pay less than those occupations that primarily employ men), then they will grasp a broader sense of why women candidates tend to receive fewer campaign contributions, in smaller amounts, when compared with men seeking the same offices. By focusing the economic perspectives of women's experience, their political experience can be better understood.

"Our institutions and the structures that fund them are changing, but that shift doesn't mean the end of interdisciplinary programs and the faculty who teach in them."

Our institutions and the structures that fund them are changing, but that shift doesn't mean the end of interdisciplinary programs and the faculty who teach in them. As agents in our workplaces and our communities, faculty and program leaders have the power to transform the institutional spaces we inhabit through our strategies for thinking through them. Assessment, properly employed, can make the navigation of interdisciplinary spaces amenable and even consistent for students and more user-friendly for overextended faculty who move in and out of these programs. Empowering faculty and students, changing our thinking, transforming our institutional spaces—that's definitely activism.

UCF Libraries Copyright Policies and Guidelines

Carole Hinshaw & Marcus Kilman



Carole Hinshaw is Head of Reference Services and is a proponent of information literacy in the curriculum.

Marcus Kilman is the Acting Head of Circulation Services.

He is also a Reference Librarian with the subject areas of engineering and computer science.

There is substantial confusion dealing with copyright issues. Much of the confusion results from information technology, electronic communication, and the ease wherein text, graphics, music and other media may be captured and reused.

To clarify concerns and provide a resource for faculty, the UCF Libraries Copyright Taskforce, with review and assistance of the UCF Office of General Counsel, recently published policies and guidelines that pertain to copyright and the principles of fair use as they apply to the appropriate use of the Libraries' services and materials. This is available online at <http://library.ucf.edu/Administration/Policies/Copyright>.

The policies apply to all UCF Libraries, including branches, regional campuses, and partnership libraries. The guidelines are intended to provide information only and should not be considered as legal advice. A useful list of online resources and guidelines appear at the end of this article and should provide additional help in clarifying common misconceptions dealing with the U.S. Copyright Act, the concept of fair use and when to seek copyright permission. There are several aspects of the guidelines that specifically affect faculty: interlibrary loan, course reserves, Information Source, permission from Special Collections/Archives, and copying.

Interlibrary Loan:

The UCF Libraries' Interlibrary Loan Department follows the provisions for fair use of materials by libraries known as the CONTU (Commission on New Technological Uses) guidelines. These guidelines require "fair use" limits on interlibrary loan borrowing. Simply put, the UCF Libraries are only allowed to request five articles during one calendar year from any one periodical for which the Libraries do not hold a current subscription. The sixth time the UCF Libraries is asked to get an article for a patron from that same journal, additional alternatives will be followed:

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2. Purchase an original copy of the work.
3. Decline to fill the request.
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5. Requests may be turned down if the copyright fee is excessive or if copy permission cannot be obtained.

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require proof that materials placed on reserve do not violate copyright guidelines. If books and other materials to be placed on Course Reserves are owned by the UCF Li-

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"Current fair use guidelines do not cover the use of material beyond one semester."

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<<http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ21.pdf>>

CONFU (Conference on Fair Use)

<<http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/dcom/olia/confu/report.htm>>

CONTU (Commission on New Technological Uses of Copyright Works)

<<http://www.cni.org/docs/infopols/CONTU.html>>

Copyright Clearance Center

<<http://www.copyright.com>>

Fair Use Guidelines for Educational Multimedia

<<http://www.adec.edu/admin/papers/fair10-17.html>>

University of Texas Copyright pages

<<http://www.utsystem.edu/OGC/IntellectualProperty/cprtindx.htm>>

U.S. Copyright Homepage

<<http://www.copyright.gov>>

Training Wheels Online

Jim Katt



Jim Katt is Assistant Professor for the Nicholson School of Communication. He is a consultant and co-author of *Technically Speaking: A Guide for Technical Communicators*. He has produced a video, *Making PowerPoint Work for You*.

One of the goals in my undergraduate Communication Research Methods class is that students be able to read quantitative communication research from scholarly journals and identify the variables being studied and understand the methodology employed. This sounds simple enough, but most students come into the class having never even seen a scholarly journal, much less read and understood one of the articles. We talk about independent and dependent variables in class, and they seem to understand the concepts, but when they start reading the journal articles, with their academic voice and methodological jargon, many students become intimidated, confused, or both.

What I needed were some non-threatening examples that would allow my students to get some practice reading and identifying variables before they jumped into the professional journals. In addition, next semester the course is being offered in the "M" format—web based components and reduced face-to-face time—so what I really needed were examples that would allow them to practice online.

The online modality seemed to be ideal for this simulated practice, drill-and-repetition type of pedagogy, in some ways, superior to a face-to-face setting. Alone at their computers, students would have no opportunity for social loafing or hanging back until another class member came up with the answers. And each student could work at his or her own pace with no penalty for those who take more time for this sort of task. The trick was to devise some examples that would include the proper elements for them to identify, but not require them to slog through the difficult academic writing—yet.

After some thought, it occurred to me that one source of the novice research reader's angst might be that it is difficult to imagine the research scenarios that the articles describe. Until one has had the opportunity to understand the methodology of several studies, much of what is discussed in the articles just doesn't make sense. And how does one ever come to understand several studies without figuring out the first one. Don't misunderstand me, I think struggling with a difficult task is a fine way to learn, and I realize removing most of the difficulty would probably also remove most of the learning experience. That said, I also realize that being intimidated and confused can result in frustration, diminished self-efficacy, and demotivation. The answer lay in creating examples that students

"Let us reform our schools, and we shall find little need of reform in our prisons." - John Ruskin

could relate to without having had any previous research experience. My solution was to begin with examples that we set in the context of familiar children's stories. How could anyone be intimidated by *Jack and Jill* or *The Three Bears*?

Eventually, I intend to create a number of these friendly-context examples. For now, I have a series of four practice "articles." They are short, non-intimidating, and (I hope) fun. The first two are based on children's stories. The third is fictitious, a little silly, but close to research that might actually take place. The final example is an abridged version of an actual study published in a journal. The article has been reduced to the bare essentials and is written in a similar style to the previous, fictitious examples. It is my hope that students who have worked through this progression of examples will be ready (or at least closer to ready) to tackle the real thing.

Here's the first sample, a study that would have real problems getting through IRB, complete with an accurately formatted (albeit phony) APA citation:

Smith, A. (1951). "The Effects of Safety Warning Messages on Children Performing in Task-Team Dyads". *Journal of Modern Parenting*, 23, 154-167.

Having observed two youngsters take a nasty spill while fetching water, Researcher Smith wondered if a warning message to "be careful while climbing the hill" might have caused the mishap to be averted. He also wondered if males were more likely to fall first, causing their female partners (dutifully hanging onto the bucket) to come tumbling after. Smith recruited 60 pairs of ten-year old children to participate in his experiment. Each pair consisted of one boy and one girl. Each pair was given a bucket and instructed to go up the hill and fetch a pail of water. Half of the groups were also told to "be careful while climbing the hill." The other half were simply told to fetch the water with no additional warning. The pairs were randomly assigned to the "warning" or "no-warning" group. The participant-pairs performed the tasks separately, could not see the other pairs performing, and, in fact, were not aware that there were other pairs. Three observers watched all of the pairs of children attempt the task. The observers noted if any of the children fell down while attempting to fetch the water and which child (boy or girl) fell first. In cases where all three observers failed to agree on their observations, the observation of the two agreeing observers was recorded.

1. What are the independent variable(s)?
2. How are they operationally defined/measured?
3. What type of data will the independent definitions/measures yield? (nominal, ordinal, interval or ratio)
4. What are the dependent variable(s)?
5. How are they operationally defined/measured?
6. What type of data will the dependent measures yield? (nominal, ordinal, interval or ratio)

I won't include the full text of the remaining examples, but the second (Behr & Behr) has to do with taking a walk while porridge cools. The third is more realistic, making no references to children's stories, and the fourth is the abridged version of a real study. The same questions, asking that the variables, measures, and data types be identified, follow each synopsis.

Of course, these exercises cover only a small portion of the course content, but if they can provide a "training wheels" experience that will result in students being more ready to tackle the real articles, their creation will have been well worth the effort. Now I need to start thinking up some easy examples for the basic statistics we'll be using. Let's see.... As I was traveling to St. Ives, I met a man who had a number of wives that was more than two standard deviations above the norm.... This may take awhile.

Faculty Center Showcases UCF Artist Anschion E. Maiden



Anschion E. Maiden was born in South Africa and immigrated to the U.S. in 1997. She completed a B.A. at the University of Pretoria. She works at the Eastern Europe Linkage Institute and the Office of Inter-

national Studies. She is also affectionately known as the "scarf lady" for her community project knitting scarves for Russian orphans.

Her work is inspired by the tribal art work that permeates the homes and communities of rural South Africa. The primary components were purchased from curio street vendors in Namibia and South Africa and indigenous Ndebele bead workers. Please come to the Faculty Center this semester to view her work.

UCF Summer Faculty Development Conference

May 2 - 5, 2005
RFP Due 5 p.m., Friday, March 4, 2005

The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning will provide 120 \$1,000/person grants for faculty members who are transforming courses or programs by emphasizing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), assessment of learning outcomes, research, service learning, interdisciplinarity, student engagement, or other innovations. Faculty members from all colleges are invited to apply (team submissions will be given preference).

<http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/events/summer_conf>

Announcing the University of Central Florida Undergraduate Research Journal

The Office of Undergraduate Studies would like to announce the *University of Central Florida Undergraduate Research Journal*. The *Journal* is to be a premier showcase of undergraduate research at the University of Central Florida. This multidisciplinary, refereed *Journal* is also a tribute to UCF's commitment to undergraduate research. The *University of Central Florida Undergraduate Research Journal* intends to increase faculty and undergraduate student interactions through research and a mentored publication process.

The University of Central Florida encourages all students to become interested in research by providing examples of what is studied in the various disciplines. The *Journal* will offer a means of disseminating and bridging knowledge between the disciplines to achieve a stronger research basis for the university and community. Specifically, the role of the *Journal* in the academic community is twofold:

1. To encourage, recognize, and reward intellectual activity of undergraduate students beyond the classroom, and
2. To provide a forum for the exchange and dissemination of research and ideas for undergraduate education.

An aim of the *Journal* is for undergraduate students to become excited and involved in research and, subsequently, publication. It is hoped that the publication experience will be positive and will encourage undergraduate students to further pursue other publication endeavors and graduate studies.

The *University of Central Florida Undergraduate Research Journal* is currently seeking manuscripts for the premier issue. Manuscripts should be submitted as soon as possible. The *Journal* is also seeking reviewers of these manuscripts as all manuscripts will undergo a double-blind review process. Information about the *Journal* and manuscript submission can be found at the *Journal* web site located at <<http://ejournal.ucf.edu>>.

The Submissions Procedure page can be found at: <<http://www.ejournal.ucf.edu/submissions.php>>.

The *Journal* is seeking reviewers of future manuscripts. Many faculty members have been preloaded into our reviewer database. In order to add or update your profile for the *Journal* please follow the following steps:

1. Enter the UCF journal web site located at: <<http://ejournal.ucf.edu/index.php>>;
2. From here click on the right-hand menu where "Faculty Mentors" is located. This should take you to the following page: <<http://www.ejournal.ucf.edu/faculty.php>>;
3. Click on your name and hit the "Update Profile" underlined link on the page or click where it says to "register a new account";
4. Please fill in all appropriate information and follow the instructions to complete or update your profile;
5. If you have any questions, you may e-mail for assistance at ejournal@mail.ucf.edu.

Through your efforts we hope that your undergraduate students' manuscripts will be published in the *University of Central Florida Undergraduate Research Journal*. We look forward to receiving, reviewing and publishing your undergraduate student research manuscripts.

Sincerely,
Alejandro Brice, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Editor, *The University of Central Florida Undergraduate Research Journal*
ejournaleditor@mail.ucf.edu



UCF-Fit

UCF-Fit Program:

The purpose of the UCF-Fit program challenge is to build community at UCF through fitness and wellness activities.

UCF-Fit meets Wednesdays in front of Classroom Building 1 at 5:15 pm. All faculty, staff and students are invited to participate. Joggers and walkers of all levels are welcome.

The UCF-Fit program is growing so keep checking the web site <<http://www.ftl.ucf.edu/ucf-fit>> for future events.

Teaching Related Conferences

International Conference on College Teaching and Learning

March 29-April 2, 2005
Jacksonville, Florida
<http://www.teachlearn.org/final.html>

NISOD: International Conference on Teaching and Learning Excellence

May 29-June 1, 2005
Austin, Texas
<http://www.nisod.org/conference/index2.html>

AAHE Twentieth Anniversary Conference

June 12-14, 2005
Toronto, Canada
<http://www.aahe.org/assessment/2005/Assessment2005.htm>

CRL 3rd International Conference

What a Difference a Pedagogy Makes: Researching Lifelong Learning and Teaching

June 23-26, 2005
Stirling, Scotland
<http://crl.gcal.ac.uk/conf.htm>

EDMedia 2005

World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia & Telecommunications

June 27-July 2, 2005
Montreal, Canada
<http://www.aace.org/conf/edmedia/call.htm>

IMPACT 2005 7th Annual WebCT User Conference

July 18- 22, 2005
San Francisco, California
<https://programs.regweb.com/go/webctimpact2005>

International Society for Exploring Teaching and Learning

October 13-15, 2005
Cocoa Beach, Florida
<http://www.isetl.org/conference>

Educause 2005

October 18-21, 2005
Orlando, Florida
<http://www.educause.edu/conference/annual/2005>



UCF Relay For Life 2005

The Relay for Life is the American Cancer Society's signature event and the number one, non-profit, special event in the country. UCF will host the Relay this coming year at the UCF track. If you are not on a team but would like to be, come join our team at the Faculty Center. For more information go to <http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/events/relayforlife>.

Dr. Judy Welch, Dr. Alison Morrison-Shetlar, and Dr. Ruth Marshall are making another quilt as a gift for the Relay for Life. They are offering the quilt in a drawing which will be made during the relay. If you would like to view the quilt

and place your name in the bowl for the drawing to receive the quilt, please stop by the Faculty Center.

Proceeds go to Relay for Life
Donations are welcome.
Stop by the Faculty Center (CL1-207)
and enter now!



Submissions

The *Faculty Focus* is a publication for all instructors at the University of Central Florida. This includes full- and part-time faculty and teaching assistants at all UCF campuses. Its purpose is to provide an exchange of ideas on teaching and learning for the university's community of teachers and scholars. It is envisioned that this publication will inspire more dialogue among faculty, whether in hallway discussions, departmental meetings, or in written articles. This represents an opportunity for faculty to reach their peers throughout the growing UCF community. The *Faculty Focus* invites you to contribute your ideas on teaching and learning in a short essay.

See the guidelines for submission online at <www.fctl.ucf.edu/focus/guidelines.htm>. Publication dates will be the middle of the first and last full months of each semester, and submission deadlines will be the Friday of the week prior. MLA format is preferred. Please send your submissions to *Faculty Focus*, fctl@mail.ucf.edu.

Faculty Center
CL1-207, 407-823-3544

Check us out Online!



www.fctl.ucf.edu

***Faculty
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