CORE

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How my Teaching has Changed at York

Allen Koretsky, CST Faculty Associate, 1999-2001

Much has changed in the 35 years since I drove along the dirt country road that was Steeles Avenue for my first visit to the then new and muddy main campus of York University. The changes have occurred in the world at large, more specifically in the world of higher education, and, more specifically still, at York University. Lester Pearson was Prime Minister of Canada then, and high technology for many of us teaching at the university consisted of "duplicating" our class assignments on a messy mimeograph machine that left blue ink on our fingers.

Yes, the technological changes that have affected the business and professional worlds and in particular the academic world are well known, so well known that most of our undergraduates, I surmise, would have difficulty imagining or remembering a world before computers, faxes, scanners, and automatic telephone answering machines. Even the neo-Luddites among us cheerfully accept and use many of these technological wonders while still being a little nervous about trying others.

The most interesting and significant change on the York campus, though, has been, not the technology, but the demography. There are many more older students in our classes today. This has important ramifications for class discussions, particularly in academic fields like mine, which is English literature; for such subjects are, willy-nilly, value-charged, and charged too with descriptions and interpretations of human experience. It stands to reason that a man or woman who has lived 45 years and is perhaps the parent of a teenager, who has been out in the work force in the so-called real world, who has been dealing with full-time jobs, mortgages, car payments, adolescent children, older parents, and so forth, may have a different view of the world from that of a bright, nineteen-year old straight out of high school; not a better or worse view, just a different one. The mix of both kinds of students in the same classroom is exhilarating.

Similarly over the past several decades the populations of Canada, Ontario, and Greater Toronto have expanded excitingly. Many different people from many different parts of the world have immigrated to Toronto. We are all so much the richer for that. Our classes reflect this dramatic change in demography. The educational effects of such change are important. They are perhaps most obvious in the requests for curricular expansion, the desire to meet our new populations with courses that suit their backgrounds, experiences, and interests, which could be quite different from those of the

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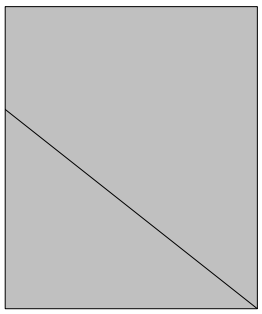
www.yorku.ca/cst/Webli

The Webliography contains a sampling of links to practical web-based resources on curriculum development, delivery and evaluation, teaching critical thinking, problem-based learning, cooperative learning, teaching with technology, TA teaching tools, helping students, and associations and journals.

In this issue



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much narrower ethnic and racial community who had heretofore determined the curriculum.

With due respect to these great changes there is another one which seems to me to be equal to the others in its importance to our professional work. It is a subtle change, but one that affects us and our students daily in our work here at York. It is difficult to describe accurately and fully what that change is, but the change is no less important for that fact. I am referring to changes in attitude toward, and techniques in, teaching. I know that these changes have affected my work significantly; I suspect they have had similar impact on many of you.

Who has not thought a good deal about the issue of authority in our culture, moral authority, intellectual authority, professional authority? The questioning of authority is, I believe, one of the hallmarks of our times. Many of us of a certain age grew up when there was a rather distant relationship between university student and teacher. That distance coincided with and indeed derived from and in turn supported an assumption of professorial authority. My thinking has gradually evolved to the point where I now believe that the very notion of "classroom authority" may in some instances be a red herring. The crucial question for teachers, I have learned, should not be, who has intellectual authority in the classroom, but rather, how can my students best learn?

As Dickens reminded us vividly 150 years ago in *Hard Times*, students, from kindergarten through graduate school, are not so many dead or static or passive vessels to be filled with facts, facts, facts. Instead all of us human beings are potentially thoughtful and creative. So I have come to believe that a good part of my job is to get students to do their own thinking about the subjects of our courses.

This view of mine does not translate into some weak, sentimental, namby-pamby surrender to student opinions. On the contrary, I believe that learning how to think critically while reading, writing, or engaging in discussion with others, is a very hard skill to master, one that can never be taken for granted, but rather must always be maintained vigilantly. I therefore try to get my students to ask questions, of me and of each other. I try to get them into the habit of debating issues, even when, or rather especially when they have very strong views on those subjects.

Along with the healthy challenge to authority, the easy expression of passion seems to be another characteristic of our time. People in our democracy have opinions about many matters, most of them, I suspect, unexamined opinions. I try to get my students to think critically about issues and their and others' opinions of issues such as the relevance of past literature, the value of a liberal arts education, the role of trade unions, the oppression of the class system, the meaning of elitism, and so forth. Long after students have forgotten almost every detail of the content of any particular undergraduate course they will have to be using their critical skills to the utmost in their jobs, their families, in the discharge of their professional and personal and civic responsibilities.

Perhaps the ultimate show of authority in the university is the professorial lecture. I confess that I still have great respect for that very old-fashioned form of teaching, a respect born perhaps out of a nostalgic memory of some of the great lecturers I heard when I was an undergraduate and graduate student, such as Walter Jackson Bate and Northrop Frye. But I have changed insofar as I have come round to believing that most lectures will benefit from the students' opportunity to interrupt, to interject, to talk among themselves in a suitable pause in the lecture created for that purpose. Let them discuss what the lecturer has been saying. Let them talk over with each other their responses, approving, disapproving, bewildered, to the lecturer's words. Let them above all respectfully challenge and question the lecturer. From a vigorous and courteous exchange in the lecture hall and in the classroom, all should profit.

The shifts in my thinking about teaching have been generated over the past several years by many different sources: formal talks and informal chats at professional conferences, the published literature on university teaching, and, above all, the resources of York's own remarkable Centre for the Support of Teaching. I urge all of us to consult all of these sources, for they are wellsprings of professional stimulation, growth, and support.

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From *ancient times to the present age thoughtful people have puzzled over the paradox that change is one of the great constants of life. In this issue of CORE four of us look at significant changes that have occurred at York over the past four decades and the ways some of these changes have affected our learning environment, our students, our curriculum and our use of technology. The articles in the current issue of CORE are critically reflective about teaching in response to important changes in our culture and on our campus. In my opening article I consider very broadly a few of the conspicuous changes that have affected us, and, in particular I note a major shift in my thinking about the relationship between teachers and students in the classroom. Ted Goossen celebrates the explosion of multiculturalism that over the last couple of decades has made York such an interesting place to work in, and he challenges us to be more open to the types of knowledge that our wonderfully diverse students bring into the classroom. When the first York students began their classes at York, there were no computers here, let alone a Computer Science Department. Peter Cribb looks at some of the changes that have occurred in Computer Science over the last several years and considers both the practical objectives of many of those students and the deeper theoretical questions of his subject. One recent innovation in university teaching has been the introduction of Course Kits as either substitutes for or supplements to traditional textbooks. Kathy Bischoping studies closely the use of this new resource from both the students' and the teachers' perspectives. As with all other issues of CORE we hope that the essays published here will stimulate thoughtful discussions and perhaps engender more constructive changes in our own classroom teaching.*

Allen Koretsky, CST Faculty Associate

Diversity in the Classroom

Ted Goossen, Division of Humanities, Faculty of Arts

Like many Americans who immigrated to Canada - in my case, in 1970 during the Vietnam War - I was not prepared for the difference between the educational systems of my old home and my new adopted one. Actually I was not prepared for anything, since I knew virtually nothing about Canada at the time. I had attended a small private school in the middle of New York City as a scholarship student, and Oberlin College, a small private university in Ohio. "Small" and "private" are the operative words here - had I gone to a large public high school, or a state university, I am sure my impressions would have differed. Now, thirty years later, with two children safely through the local public system and almost twenty years of teaching at York under my belt, I often find myself reflecting on the adjustments I made while studying and teaching here, and the remarkable changes that have taken place in Toronto since my arrival.

As outsiders keep telling us, Toronto is a most unusual city. Yet when my wife Tam, a native of Hong Kong and I arrived, it seemed sleepy and quiet compared to the places we had just left, not at all the "multi-cultural" metropolis it is today. Whereas roughly 30,000 Chinese Canadians were living here then, for example, today there are over a dozen times that number, and a similar growth has taken place in the South Asian, West Indian, African, and other so-called visible minority communities. One statistical measure of this expansion is the fact that sometime last year the combined number of these minorities came to surpass that of the white population as a whole. In fact, now we are supposedly the most diverse city in the world, so that our students bring to class an amazing array of languages, cultures, and life experiences. Given that York functions as the "first university" for immigrant families in the area, and that the demographic transformation our community is undergoing is likely to continue for some time, the diversity of our student body will only increase.

These conditions stand in stark contrast to those of my own undergraduate experience. Classes at Oberlin were largely white, and made up primarily of children of the elite, with a smaller number of emerging "elites-to-be". Yet the school had a proud liberal tradition, having been, in the 1830s, the very first American institute of higher learning to award degrees to women and blacks. Moreover, as students of the late '60s we favoured the breaking down of class barriers and the taking of education and political ideas "to the people", a goal quite at variance with our decidedly privileged circumstances. My immediate reaction to the mass education system I encountered in Toronto was therefore overwhelmingly positive. Public schools in New York were and are divided by race and class, with the majority of families who can afford it, sending their kids to private schools, while elite institutions like Oberlin, despite their egalitarian ideals, separate the rich and the gifted from the larger community. Schools in Toronto exhibit less of this division and hypocrisy, although there is little reason to be complacent, given the ongoing changes taking place in our social structure.

Diversity at York, however, is far more than just a matter of complexion or numbers - it is key to the intellectual project we are collectively undertaking. Unlike in the old days, when Western Civilisation was the standard against which everything else could be measured, today we are challenged to understand it in relative terms, alongside the traditions represented by so many of our students. The way in which the "self" has been constructed in Christianity, for example, obviously becomes clearer when one steps outside the forest, so to speak, and looks at selfhood in South Asian, East Asian, or African religions. Monotheism is viewed most clearly against a polytheistic backdrop, linear mythologies against those that are cyclical in nature. An understanding of Western narrative form is obviously enhanced by reference to narrative traditions of cultures that have nothing to do with Aristotle and the Greeks. In short, when the Other emerges as a full-fledged (and diverse) partner in human cultural development, and not a bogeyman or exotic locus for Western imaginings, we are all challenged to develop more sophisticated and comparative frameworks for our analysis and our teaching, whatever our fields.

Our students should be active players in this process, not just for intellectual reasons (although these are, as I have just suggested, of crucial significance) but because it relates directly to their personal lives. They, after all, are experiencing diversity as a daily reality, and many if not most have to deal with problems of a "comparative" nature as they struggle to resolve the differences between the cultures (and often languages) of their home and those of the broader community. Comparative study of any kind

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Establishing Constructive Dialogue in the Classroom

- Set up a safe space or environment in the classroom for dialogue to take place by:
  a) Establishing ground rules for dialogue.
  b) Establishing a level of trust and respect for each other.
  c) Allowing students to get to know each other on a personal basis by maximizing interaction among all participants.
- Teach students tools for engaging in productive discussions about challenging topics, such as active listening, taking ownership of their comments, adopting a worldview.
- Understand that controversial or challenging topics can be great catalysts for fostering learning in the classroom. However, they must be handled carefully and appropriately if learning, rather than anger, frustration, and animosity, is to be achieved:
  - Timing is critical. Before you present a controversial topic, ensure that participants have had enough time to build trusting relationships, and feel comfortable in the classroom.
  - Don't catch students off-guard. Before presenting controversial material, spend some time placing it in context.
  - If you are unsure about the materials that you want to use and how they will be received by students, consult the Centre for the Support of Teaching, the Centre for Human Rights and Equity, your colleagues, or other knowledgeable colleagues on campus to provide you with some feedback and guidance regarding your selection.
- Encourage open and honest communication, as it is a powerful tool for creating understanding and dialogue.
- Keep in mind that one student from a particular group does not represent that entire group and that all students come to the classroom with varying levels of experiences and knowledge. Too often ethnic/racial minority, gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered and international students complain that they are called on by instructors to educate the class or to voice opinions on issues that they know very little about.
- Be aware that some social or group identities are invisible. Religion, sexual orientation, gender identification, social class, culture, ethno-racial background, and disability status are some examples of identities that may be represented in your class, but not visible to the eye. Thus, class activities must be thought through so that these students are not put in a position where they are asked to reveal themselves.
- Encourage students to bring their own knowledge and experience into the classroom by using individual and collaborative learning techniques including group discussions, research papers and presentations, and group projects.
- When appropriate, view and use difficult situations as an opportunity to teach.

Adapted from Guidelines for Constructive Dialogue in the Classroom, Intergroup Relations Center, University of Arizona (www.asu.edu/provost/intergroup/resources/classguidelines.html). See also the Bulletins on Inclusive Teaching at York University, prepared by the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning (www.yorku.ca/cst/res/index.html). In addition, a series of workshops on Negotiating Power in the Classroom are being held throughout the spring term (contact lbriskin@yorku.ca for details).

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helps bring such struggles into consciousness: yet it is also true that there is special meaning in studying traditions that are connected to "your" home culture. In many American universities, in fact, a great deal of attention is being paid to the various "diasporic" communities themselves, with entire courses of study being devoted to the area. If one looks ahead, it seems likely that we will be facing increasing pressure, both intellectual and political, to provide similar types of programmes at York University in the not-too-distant-future.

It would be a mistake, however, to wait for such programmes to provide "the answer" to the professional gauntlet that diversity throws down before us. To be better teachers we need to understand our students, and the cultural traditions their families hail from, more fully. This in turn challenges us to be more wide-ranging and comparative in our approaches, and more open to the types of knowledge that our students bring with them to class. If York, as statistics suggest, is one of the most diverse institutions of higher learning in the world, then it is up to us to develop pedagogical strategies that take full advantage of that fact. Such a process, I would suggest, will enrich us intellectually even as it strengthens the fabric of society and the culture in which we live.

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In sum, I believe now, much more confidently than when I began the adventure of teaching over 35 years ago, that the principal job of the university teacher today is to get the students to think actively, intelligently, and responsibly about a particular subject and then to learn how to apply those skills to other problems, intellectual, moral, political, and personal. I am still "traditional" enough to believe that that good thinking has to be based on knowledge, and that knowledge itself is acquired from many different sources, sometimes from mom and dad, sometimes from your buddy at work or in the locker room, sometimes from a startling, unexpected encounter with strangers, at a bus stop or in a hospital emergency room. Insofar as we are university teachers many of us still believe, and particularly those of us in traditional subjects like mine, that important knowledge is acquired from studious reading of books, sometimes very difficult books. That kind of knowledge is, in the beginning, hard slogging. But the payoff is immense and unending. The recognition that you are using your mind energetically and creatively has to be one of the best feelings in the world.

Trends in Computer Science Education at York

Peter Cribb, Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Pure and Applied Science

Information technology (IT) is still in its infancy and its role in education is the subject of much experimentation – not just in applying technologies to the teaching and learning process, but also in the curriculum itself. Given the pace of change in computer technology, the need for a responsive curriculum and flexible strategies for its application to education cannot be doubted. In this essay, I discuss recent trends in computer science education rather than the application of the technology to the teaching and learning process.

Computer science has attracted significant targeted funding recently and might well continue to do so. The challenge is to respond in a way that preserves the broad aims of higher education while satisfying the immediate needs of our society. Clearly not all students will go on to further the basic knowledge of the science, so we must provide an education for the majority that produces an enquiring, analytic mind hand-in-hand with the vocational skills that are so desired.

The past decade has seen the number of graduates in computer science at York treble – and this is before the anticipated increase in graduates resulting from new government funding opportunities. This surge is undoubtedly due to the ever more ubiquitous impact of computers on our lives, and the resulting perception (true or false) that the field leads to greater career opportunities. Unfortunately, the expectations of many students are probably at odds with the reality of the computer science curriculum. Because powerful software enables the user to exert a high level of control over the computer relatively easily, many students come to computer science expecting it to increase their level of expertise with such computer applications. The vocational promise of the field, particularly in those "hot" areas so visibly touted in the press, is uppermost in the minds of many students.

However, like most scientific fields, computer science has theoretical foundations based in mathematics, and pervasive applications of mathematics in most areas. The curriculum is built on a significant mathematical foundation which students have to learn before they can tackle the high profile applied areas on a level that leads to a deep understanding of principles. The focus of the discipline is on the theory and knowledge necessary to build (engineer, if you like) the very tools that are used in such exciting applications in our society. In fact, the world needs relatively few people capable of building those tools, but considerably more people capable of understanding the principles – the capabilities and limitations – of such tools, and applying them to useful tasks.

For this reason computer science is the wrong field of study for many students. You don't need a computer science education to build a great web site, or an e-commerce solution, or to set up and maintain a computer network. External realities demand mass education in the area of information technology, but traditional computer science is, I suggest, the wrong solution.

To answer this apparent mismatch between the goals of a traditional academic computer science program and the needs of society we have devised a new information technology program (ITEC). The intention is to merge a technological core with the critical and analytic skills of a traditional liberal arts education. The technical core includes basic understanding of the engineering/scientific foundations of computing as well as the technical expertise to apply IT tools. Critical and analytic skills are fostered through courses that examine the cultural, social, and ethical dimensions of information technology. The justification for this is a perception that organisations need individuals who understand both the technology and the human dimensions (individual and organizational) of using that technology. Understanding the science of computing is important too, but for relatively fewer people – those who will design and build the structures others will apply.

Even in these early days of the program the attractiveness to students of this approach is already apparent, as shown in Figure 1. This is not just a matter of a program name sending the right marketing signals. The curriculum itself sends signals that resonate with many students. Those who are interested in a traditional liberal arts education but who want to use such an education to ride one of the dominant technological forces of our times will seek out the program. Our challenge at York is to build a program of the highest possible quality.

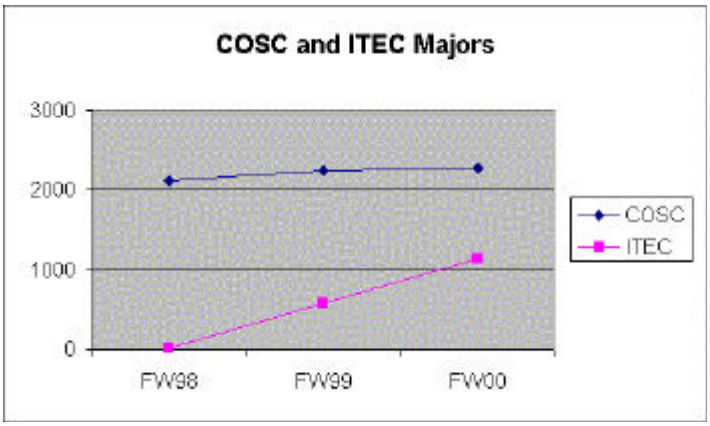

Figure 1

Until relatively recently, the first-year computer science student body in the Faculties of Arts and Pure and Applied Science was rather homogeneous as far as age and academic background were concerned – almost all students were embarking on their first degree either immediately or shortly after leaving secondary school. This is definitely no longer the case.

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(Trends in Computer Science continued from page 5)

In the past two years, most of the enrollment growth we have experienced has come from students who have had some post-secondary education before coming to York. Growth in the "traditional" student body has not changed. This is demonstrated for example in Figure 2, which traces changes in the backgrounds of students who enrolled in COSC1020 (the first major stream course in computer science) for the fall terms of 1998 and 1999. The growth in students with a York background in 1999 is largely due to the inclusion of Atkinson students (following the merger of our programs) and the advent of the ITEC program. Prior to fall 1999, students with a York background were either repeating COSC1020 or had changed their major.

Figure 2

Most of the new demographic group are recent immigrants or international students, and for many of them computer science will be their second degree. Thus, computer science instructors face the task of teaching students directly out of high school side-by-side with mature students from diverse backgrounds, many of who already have a degree. In addition, some courses include both computer science and information technology majors whose educational objectives differ significantly.

Despite this increase in the diversity of our student body, there has been surprisingly little change in our teaching methods. Still more surprising is the limited use that we currently make of computing in the teaching process itself. Teaching is still for the most part face-to-face communication of information, coupled with the careful selection of assignment exercises that direct the students' learning activities. Computers are used in the teaching process, much as they are used in other disciplines, to facilitate the communication and presentation of information. And of course, they are crucial for carrying out many of the learning activities, if not the very subject of those learning activities.

Recently, in response to the increasing volume of work in COSC1020, we have begun to use computers to provide limited but immediate feedback to students on laboratory exercises. Our challenge is to find other ways to enhance the learning experience for our increasingly diverse student body.

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Nomination Procedure

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Email enquires should be directed to Dr. Arshad Ahmad, Coordinator, 3M Teaching Fellows Program at arshad@mercato.concordia.ca.

Nomination Deadline: May 11, 2001

Will they do the Readings?

Katherine Bischoping, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts

Many of York's instructors painstakingly assemble kits of readings for courses, striving to provide their students with diverse and challenging original sources. Yet will those students do the readings?

Remarkably little is known about how students engage with reading kits and about how instructors can select readings most effectively. While experimental psychologists can tell us the results of laboratory studies of the cognitive processes that reading involves, educational philosophers can advocate interdependent learning processes, and students can offer in-class feedback, each of these sources has its limitations. Psychological research removes students from their ordinary settings and tells us more about how students read than whether they do so; work of a more philosophical nature has tended not to provide empirical evidence; and students' impressions tend to be collected unsystematically or in conditions where confidentiality can not be ensured.

In 1998-2000, I attempted to address these issues by conducting research involving twelve courses taught by six York instructors from five disciplines, with totals of 334 students and 394 assigned readings. The students provided systematic feedback on each reading, using a questionnaire I devised. For their part, the instructors participated in qualitative interviews before and after receiving student feedback. In some cases, I was able to study a particular course for two consecutive years. The following sections highlight some of what the participating instructors and I learned about students' reading, instructors' teaching, and the practice of evaluation.

Would less be more?

Shorter readings are better just because it is easier to stay attentive until the end. (Humanities student)

Too much material to take in all at one time sometimes. (Sociology student)

In all but one of the courses I studied, numerous students requested that instructors shorten and/or reduce the number of readings. In a very rough exploration of whether this strategy would increase student reading, I examined whether students recalled a greater proportion of their readings in those courses where fewer were assigned. Regardless of whether 7 or 57 readings had been assigned, absolutely no relation between these variables was apparent.

However, it was apparent that the sheer number of readings students were able to recall rose with the number assigned. Thus, despite their frequent appeals for less to read, students appeared to respond positively to instructors' high expectations about the amount of reading required.

Strange discourses

French Studies instructor, in 1st interview: I say to the students, you have to fly casual [with the reading by X], we know each other. Colleagues would say, the kids can't handle it. I would say, they're not kids and yes, they can - look at the course evaluations.

The same instructor, in a subsequent interview, after reading student feedback such as "X was pretty impossible to understand. I didn't get anything out of the reading.": For X, there are massive comments. I say, ok, that could make me drop it.

A concern mentioned by students of all disciplines I studied was that readings could be too difficult. In part, this occurred because the instructors in the study had a strong pedagogical commitment to exposing students to journal articles and other original sources while students were "baffled by the strangeness and complexity of primary sources and by their unfamiliarity with academic discourse." (Bean 1996)

The scenario quoted above is an extreme one. Only occasionally did instructors decide to drop a reading in response to student feedback. Another response was to recognize that to

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Kathy Bischoping with one of the first books she read as a child.

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students, poor writing can magnify hugely the apparent complexity of a text. Therefore, instructors concluded, more attention should be paid to style when choosing readings. Finally, instructors thought that they should be more explicit to students about their reasons for assigning difficult readings. One instructor remarked: "they should be challenged with difficult readings but something that comes through is that, if it is difficult because they're left on their own to judge it or if it is analyzed, but insufficiently, that's bad."

Use it or lose it?

[I did not expect students to rate case studies so positively] because the cases are much more demanding and there's more pressure in class to discuss them. But I give them the 12 in class and I tell them that one of them is going to be on the final, so usually they study them quite well. (Administrative Studies instructor)

I based my opinions of the readings on the assignments that were given out. I think that a lot of the readings were just other information that was not useful for assignments and exams. (Sociology student)

Recommendations for increasing the chances that students will do the readings

1. Review your selection of readings with someone you trust.
2. Consult with a professional librarian.
3. Check your assumptions about your reading selection (e.g., what proportion of authors do you think are female?)
4. Seek out systematic feedback from students: what do they really read and when do they really read it?
5. Demonstrate to students how you read academic text.
6. Help structure your students' reading by assigning a series of questions for them to answer as they read.
7. Balance the length of readings with their complexity.
8. Use the appeal of contemporary and personally meaningful material strategically to introduce more complex work.
9. Be aware that many students focus only on material they believe is "required."
10. If students resist the texts you choose by conflating them with your body/identity, don't stay isolated – find allies.

To the surprise of several instructors, York students judged definitively that the importance of a reading could be determined by whether it was well explicated in class periods or used in assignments or exams. While this finding seems to imply that instructors should apply a simple "use it or lose it" formula when they select readings, Bean (1996) is more cautious. He recommends making students responsible for material not covered in class in order to break "the vicious reading cycle...teachers explain readings in class because students are poor readers; students read poorly because teachers explain the readings in class."

The many faces of relevance

Basically, I crossed out the material from the Bible. I understand that Christianity is the basis of Western Culture. But I don't think there should be a lot of this. (Humanities student)

Some [readings] are very outdated. It is hard to discuss in 1999 about ideas as old as 1992. (Administrative Studies student)

Any current events might be included during the time they are happening, especially if there is a relation to the History context. (History student)

In addition to preferring materials relevant to their grades, students sought out materials that were familiar, contemporary, or personally meaningful. The instructors I studied felt ambivalent about this. On the one hand, they applauded students' interest in having academic work speak to their experiences and concurred with researchers who locate students' personal experiences at the heart of learning. On the other, instructors also insisted that students develop the analytic skills to deal with both the personal and the general, the familiar and the strange. In this perspective, they agreed with those researchers who depict new college students as cognitive egocentrists.

The quote above about the relevance of the Bible is but one illustration of how students can read course materials as statements about the bodies or identities in the classroom. Remarks to the effect that a person of colour should delete material on race, or that a feminist should change her readings because "a lot of the femininity material isn't as important", and so forth, underscore the chilly climate that student evaluations can create for instructors.

Tensions in the academy

An instructor perusing my longer report for its practical recommendations might find many helpful, or at least benign, pointers: discuss your reading selection with someone, enlist the help of a professional librarian, test your predictions about how the sex (and other identities) of authors are distributed, use systematic student evaluations, and so forth. However, I would place foremost the recommendation that instructors recognize how their choice of readings, and students' use of them, are imbued with the tensions of today's academy.

In my longer report, I show that these tensions are manifest in the complex and sometimes contradictory roles in which students and instructors are cast. A student may be depicted as, at once, a mercenary, an egocentrist, an overwhelmed novice, an independent source of knowledge, a member of the Dead Poets Society, and a vulnerable individual whose confidentiality must be protected. An instructor may be, at once, harried, eager to challenge, isolated by colleagues, embattled by consumerism, surprised by the difficulty of predicting students' preferences,

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E-Journals: Options and Caveats

Jody Warner, CST Librarian Associate and Scott Library

Options

There's something about new web products or services, once their benefits have been tried and trumpeted by a few. Word spreads fast and people want it yesterday. Take full-text electronic articles as an example. E-journals first appeared in academic libraries about the mid-1990s and like most things online have grown exponentially since that time. And many of you either are already reading, or are itching to read, articles from the comfort of your office or home. Keeping this in mind, let me share a few caveats and tips.

Caveats first

While it's true the number of online journals increase daily let's not forget that the print world has had a couple thousand years head start. For most disciplines, limiting your research to electronic sources means you miss the majority of the periodical literature in your field. So don't say a complete bye to paper yet!

And note that periodicals with both print and electronic access don't necessarily offer you the same thing in both formats. For the most part, print is still seen as the primary starting point and so tends to offer the most complete and original copy. Typical examples of things sometimes missing in online versions of periodicals are graphs, charts, illustrations, page numbers, editorials and letters to the editors.

On the flip side electronic versions may have value-added features like providing hyperlinks to footnotes or other relevant articles. Cost can also pose a challenge. Tenopir, an expert in online journals, notes that "Recent web hype has led many to believe that electronic journals are free. Actually, journals that bear no direct cost to the user are uncommon among scholarly publications".[1] Of course the library picks up most of these costs but a lack of funds makes it a puzzle to decide which journals to subscribe to in print, which electronically, and which in both formats.

A final thought, not really a caveat, but a point worth pondering is how using online journals may affect the way we conduct research. For instance, current searching technology gives one fingertip access to millions of articles and can jump you right to the relevant point in a chosen article. These kinds of capabilities may encourage a sort of skimming approach to information as opposed to considering it in a very contextual way.

Lest the caveats scared you off let me confess that I quickly found an e-journal or two to help me write this brief column, and very handy they were too.

Tips you might find useful

If you want to locate scholarly periodicals the major resource to consult is the Association of Research Libraries' *Directory of Scholarly Electronic Journals and Academic Discussion* (kept at the Reference desk, Scott library). Hot off the press, this source lists 3900 peer-reviewed journal titles available electronically. A fairly detailed subject index allows a search for e-journals in a particular field and full access and publication details are provided.

To browse through online periodicals at York, your best bet is to check out our E-journals database that contains over 8000 titles. The database is accessible from the library homepage (www.library.yorku.ca) by selecting Electronic Library, Electronic Journals. Currently you can check a journal alphabetically by title and find out how to access it online. It may be a web journal we've subscribed to in which case you just click on the hyperlink provided. Or the journal may be available in one of our full-text databases (eg. Expanded Academic, ABI Inform, Newscan, Canadian Periodical Index). The database also notes which years or volumes of the periodical are available in full-text.

A coming attraction of the E-journals database is a subject index that will allow one to search our journal holdings by specific discipline. A final source to consider is the website *All Academic* (www.allacademic.com). As the name suggests, this site is an index to free scholarly material (including articles) on the net. When an item comes up, its publication type is identified, full author qualifications are provided and the citation is listed in standard bibliographic format.

So hopefully now you're set to get comfortable and surf the multitude of e-journals available...

References

[1] Tenopir, C. (1997) The complexities of electronic journals. *Library Journal*. V122(2): 37.

TA Day 2001

Tuesday, September 4

19th annual TA Day Conference

A One-Day Conference of Professional Development for Teaching Assistants at York University

CHECK OUT THE CST WEBSITE FOR FURTHER UPDATES!
http://www.yorku.ca/cst/

2000-2001 YUFA GRANT AND FELLOWSHIP AWARDS

Every year, two university-wide programmes of awards are available to full-time faculty: Teaching-Learning Development Grants and Release-Time Teaching Fellowships. Teaching-Learning Development Grants are intended to support projects which have the potential to make significant curricular or methodological contributions to teaching and learning at York, or to enable faculty to enhance their own teaching skills. Release-Time Teaching Fellowships are intended to provide recipients with the opportunity to develop innovative teaching and learning projects or to enhance their own teaching skills, when such development or enhancement could not take place in the context of a full teaching assignment.

COMBINATION RELEASE-TIME TEACHING FELLOWSHIPS TEACHING-LEARNING DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

- **Susan Murtha** (Psychology/Arts) *The Creation of a Virtual Lab to Enhance Learning of Physiological Psychology* (0.5 course release and $1,100)

RELEASE-TIME TEACHING FELLOWSHIPS

- **Ray Ellenwood** (School of Arts& Letters/Atkinson) *Development of an Internet Course on Surrealism* (1.0 course release)
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- **David Jopling** (Philosophy/Arts) *Teaching and Instructional Materials for Secondary School Philosophy Teachers* (0.5 course release)
- **Gary Klaasen** (Earth & Atmospheric Science/FPAS) *Curriculum Innovation in Atmospheric Modelling and Numerical Weather Prediction* (0.5 course release)

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- **Shelley Hornstein** (School of Arts & Letters/Atkinson) *Fine Arts and the Web: Technology, Space and Cultural Institutions* ($2,500)
- **Ron Singer** (Theatre/Fine Arts) *Redefining Honesty: Re-Examining 'Honesty' in the Acting Process* ($2,500)
- **Karen Valihora** (English/Arts) *The Small Town in Film and Literature* ($2,500)
- **Paul Zandbergen** (Faculty of Environmental Studies) *Developing Multimedia Content for a WebCT Component of a Course in Water Resources Management* ($2,500)

For further information about the 2001-2002 Teaching-Learning Development Grants and the Release-Time Teaching Fellowships, please contact YUFA, (416) 736-5236.

(Will They Do the Readings?...from page 8)

promulgator of a chilly climate, or subjected to one. Accordingly, the student-instructor relation of learning and teaching takes many intricate forms.

This recommendation diverges from the others in a fundamental way. It directs instructors to identify collectively, rather than through individual initiative, the institutional and political factors that influence how they teach (see Child and Williams 1996, who address these issues). In part, I advocate collective action because these factors may be perceived more readily in consciousness-raising discussions, which elicit multiple perspectives and experiences, than in individual reflection. In part, it is because such factors are best addressed by collective action.

References

Bean, J. (1996) *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Child, M. and Williams, D.D. (1996) "College learning and teaching: Struggling with/in the tensions." *Studies in Higher Education* 21(1):31-42.

Note:

Please contact Katherine Bischoping at kbischop@yorku.ca for a copy of the complete report with references, statistical tables, and the student feedback questionnaire. She is also available for departmental workshops.

Reflections on Teaching and Learning … *York's Way*

We are delighted to announce our new book on teaching and learning… York's way. *Voices from the Classroom: Reflections on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, with over 70 York authors, is slated to appear on the York Bookstore shelves in early April. The book is a joint publication of Garamond Press and the Centre for the Support of Teaching, York University. At a later time, the book's contents will posted on the internet.

Several years ago, the Centre for the Support of Teaching set out to produce a book on university teaching and learning. Recognizing that very little literature thus far existed to provide a framework for teaching and learning from a uniquely Canadian perspective, and that the wide-ranging expertise needed to create such a resource could be found right here at York, the Centre sought to fill that gap. Editors Janice Newton (Political Science), Jerry Ginsburg (History), Jan Rehner (Academic Writing), Pat Rogers (Mathematics/Education), Susan Sbrizzi (Women's Studies), and John Spencer (Academic Writing) deserve our special thanks for all the hard work and good ideas that helped pull this project together.

Voices from the Classroom brings together a broad diversity of voices at the University – undergraduate students, graduate students, TAs, contract and full-time faculty, staff and administrators – and together they provide a rich array of ideas, advice and strategies on teaching and student learning in higher education. The topics span a continuum from the theoretical to the practical, from students speaking about their experience at university to teachers' reflections on pedagogy within a diverse community, from learning theories to teaching strategies, and from course design to assignments and evaluation. The book is designed to be used both as a resource to address specific teaching and learning challenges, and as a broader reference source on university teaching. It will have broad appeal to the university teaching community in many large urban campuses across North America and we expect that it will quickly become a "classic" among books on university teaching for both beginning TAs and seasoned professors. *Voices from the Classroom* is yet further evidence of the extent to which critical reflection and scholarship permeate the learning environment here at York.

Voices from the Classroom: Reflections on Teaching and Learning in HigherEducation

Edited by Janice Newton, Jerry Ginsburg, Jan Rehner, Pat Rogers, Susan Sbrizzi and John Spencer, (2001) Garamond Press, Toronto, 376 pages, $29.95 distributed by the York Bookstore.

Section I, ***Power, Diversity and Equity in the Classroom,*** examines power, gender, race, feminist pedagogy, heterosexism, disability, adult education, and teaching English as a second language.

Section II, ***Theories and Models of Student Learning,*** introduces several different theories of learning, and how theories of learning can inform our teaching practices.

Section III, ***Course Design***, introduces issues in course design from the sciences and the humanities.

Section IV, ***Working with Graduate Students***, highlights two dimensions of the graduate learning experience: as students in a discipline and as apprentice teachers.

Section V, ***Academic Honesty***, focuses different ways to understand issues of academic integrity, and teaching to prevent academic dishonesty in different settings.

Section VI, ***Teaching and Learning Strategies***, covers a broad range of teaching strategies, including lecturing, seminars, tutorials and group learning.

Section VII, ***Assignments and Evaluation***, offers ideas on a variety of assignments, as well as a section on grading and evaluation in different disciplinary contexts.

Section VIII***, Developing and Assessing your Teaching***, describes ways to obtain feedback on teaching performance from students and colleagues, and includes a Teaching Evaluation Guide and a Teaching Documentation Guide.

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