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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Using the Taxonomy of Significant Learning[1] approach to integrated course design, I systematically design courses to achieve six types of learning: *foundational knowledge, application, integration, caring, the human dimension, and learning how to learn (Figure 1)*. This approach employs backward design starting with what you hope for your students five years out, long after they leave your classroom. It asks you to think about what you would like them to be able to do and the people you would like them to be. Starting with this 'big dream', you establish learning objectives, then build teaching and learning activities that work towards those goals, and finally build assessments to measure if learning is achieved.

One of the key features of this approach is using 'educative assessment' to measure student learning and provide feedback. With educative assessment, students participate in forward-looking authentic assessments that replicate or simulate realistic contexts from professional settings and civic life rather than backward looking or auditive assessments of learning. Students are provided criteria and standards for assignments so they are not just learning how to do something, but they are learning to do it well. In addition to evaluation according to criteria and standards, students participate in self-assessment. During class time, students engage in active learning where they are doing authentic assessments, observing others, and engaging in reflection. Each course works towards a 'Rich Learning Experience' where students demonstrate multiple types of learning on one culminating project.
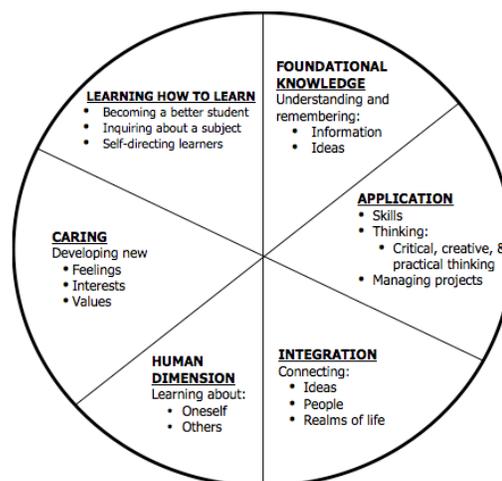

Figure 1. Taxonomy of Significant Learning (Fink, 2013)

In each course, I focus on the primary course content, a secondary skill area, such as effectively working in teams, and integrate High Impact Practices (HIP) or those practices that research has demonstrated to have a significant impact on student learning such as e-portfolios, collaborative projects, service learning, writing intensives, and global learning.[2] Real time assessment techniques such as early- and late-term assessments and active learning strategies such as minute papers and think-pair-share are used in each course to understand class dynamics and to make mid-course adjustments to foster a productive learning environment.[3,4] I have completed extensive pedagogical training with leaders in the field to develop this approach and can deliver courses in face-to-face, hybrid, and online formats. I have 40 hours of training in instructional design in Canvas and have delivered multi-day trainings for faculty in course design using a Learning Management System.

Diversity and inclusion are priorities in my pedagogy. My efforts to establish an inclusive learning environment in the classroom grew out of my interest in strategies to facilitate meaningful dialogue about race, class, and health disparities in my courses. As an educator, it is essential to have a meaningful dialogue in the classroom about the range of lived experiences in the world and the social determinants of health. In June 2018, I participated in a Faculty Institute for Diversity at Cornell University to learn about developing initiatives for inclusive teaching. I returned to campus to reflect on my current teaching practices and to pilot some of the strategies in my own courses. To create inclusive learning environments, course policies, classroom climate, and course design must intentionally create space for all students to learn. Some of the strategies I employ are (1) soliciting feedback regularly from students through an early and late-term assessment to monitor classroom climate, (2) setting explicit expectations and providing feedback to create a clear path for students to efficiently direct their energy and help students develop the skills to give themselves corrective feedback, (3) designing for multiple types of learning so students are likely to connect with the course material, and (4) developing course content that reflects diversity and barriers to inclusion so students have greater exposure to diversity and are more likely to recognize or see something they relate to.

Application of my Teaching Philosophy

To demonstrate my pedagogical approach, I highlight the key features of two courses I designed and deliver in the undergraduate public health program: Research Methods and Global Health.

Research Methods

The goal for Research Methods is for students to think and do as a scientist does by asking a research question relevant to a Request for Proposal focused on health equity, and working with a team to design a study to answer the question. The course includes a survey of research methodology including quantitative and qualitative study designs. Each class reviews keys concepts, asks student to apply the concept to a case study or scenario and then, working in teams, students apply the concept to the development of their own research proposal. Concurrent with *foundational knowledge* and semester long educative assessments that ask students to *apply* and *integrate* this knowledge into the development of a research proposal, this course focuses on the *learning how to learn* domain of significant learning. Students learn evidence-based skills for working with a team including taking the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and participating in facilitated discussions with the Director of Career Services about how individual traits and preferences, habits of communication, patterns of action, attitudes, talents, and values influence working in teams as well as strategies for applying increased self-awareness for more effective teamwork. Students participate in reflection, peer evaluation, and self-assessment around the teamwork experience of developing a research proposal. The rich learning experience culminates at the end of the semester where teams prepare an application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for their research and present it before an IRB review panel made up of members of D'Youville's IRB Committee. After fielding questions, making revisions, and receiving "approval", teams present their research proposal to a grant review panel made up of faculty from the department and one project is selected for "funding" based on the innovation and soundness of the research design. The research proposal and IRB application are included in the student's e-portfolio (HIP).

Students demonstrate *integration* of course content into other aspects of their academic and professional lives as well their thoughts on the course design through learning reflection assignments throughout the semester:

> "This research course was one of the most challenging courses I've ever taken in my academic career. However, I say with confidence that this is the class that has taught the most not only about myself, but what it takes to be a decent researcher. The semester for me couldn't have been more of a success and I will be walking away with multiple new techniques and ways of thinking as I continue with the program… Another aspect that stood out was how the class came together at the end. Every exercise, activity, and homework assignment were perfectly correlated to give us the most information in a short period of time."

> "As I continue my studies each semester, I feel as though all the pieces of my education start to come together. Things I learn from one class are used in others, and learning styles I obtain from one professor, I mix with other professors. This semester, I feel like I have really *learned*. I noticed it when I started to have intellectual conversations with people about what I learned, and that is a very satisfying feeling."

Global Health

Global Health is an interdisciplinary course that draws on faculty expertise from diverse disciplines to examine public health on a global scale. The course covers key global health foundational knowledge such as the global burden of disease, education, poverty, culture, environmental hazards, communicable disease, and human rights. Class time is spent doing simulations, case studies, and games to grapple with challenges facing global populations. Concurrent with course content, this is a writing-intensive course (HIP) where students research public health in an assigned country using reputable sources, write weekly papers, and deliver an engaging Ignite style presentation (5 minutes, 20 slides). The course also focuses on the *integration* and *human* dimensions of learning. The country project weekly papers receive substantial feedback and are revised at the end of the semester into a final paper. The writing quality from the first to the eighth paper is markedly improved through integration of timely and detailed feedback. To contrast the writing of research papers, students contribute to a class blog on global health current events focusing on capturing the reader's attention with engaging language, storytelling, and design. To further explore crafting a good story, a necessary skill for public health professionals, students participate in Global Health Book Club where they each select a global health title then read, engage in dialogue, and collaboratively make sense of the story in the context of global health course concepts with other students reading the same book (HIP).

Students have responded positively to the course, commenting on *learning how to learn* and *integration* with other coursework and life experiences, and the *human dimension*. One student commented, "I think what's

working well for me is the fact that our papers are short but specific. I can already see my development in writing, especially in finding sources" on an instructor-administered late-term assessment that asked about aspects of the course that most contributed to student learning. Students also reflect and describe their own learning in a final exam reflection essay. One student described significant learning in the *learning how to learn* domain: "I could describe the global health class with many words but for me, the best is eye-opening. I believe this class truly changed my perspective on not only the world and its health, but also on learning in the sense that I have really discovered how to learn."

Another student reflected on learning in the *integration* and *human dimension* domains:

> "Overall, global health has been an eye-opener for me a woman, a student, as a future educator and healthcare professional, as a disadvantaged youth, and simultaneously a privileged one. I thought I knew what privilege was in the most basic of needs, clothing, food, shelter. Then the basics became appropriate clothing for weather conditions, adequate and nutritious food, shelter that would provide sufficient covering, and no longer seemed basic as the costs didn't always outweigh the benefits. It became a cascade of events as one small problem affected one thing that in turn affected another. I recognized this as the social determinants of health from Health Behavior and Community Health."

At the end of the semester, students have the opportunity to participate in a global health study abroad experience (HIP). Each spring, the course travels to a different global city for a three-week experience including public health focused site visits, guest speakers, and field trips as well as cultural excursions and free time to independently explore as a student living abroad. These experiences have included visiting the Broad Street Pump on an early public health walking tour, visiting the first operating theater, volunteering at a food bank, learning about the History of Medicine through Galileo's works, and visiting a mental health day center, public health community health center, and public hospital. The students go through a transformation that we observe as professors and that they often are only beginning to make sense of by the end of the experience. Students learn to read maps, navigate new settings independently, many for the first time, and challenge themselves in a range of ways including living with roommates for the first time, getting around without speaking the language, exposure to new and different cultural beliefs and practices, trying new foods, and experiencing independence in new ways. Students traveling on study abroad have commented on their experiences in final evaluations:

> "Everything is a learning experience and sometimes that will include working through problems in real-time with no prior knowledge."

> "The first thing I've learned is to accept others for who they are. We all walk different paths and the paths that we walk influence who we will become. Everyone is different and everyone has different views and it is important to respect everyone's view even if you don't agree with it."

Conducting Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) research on the student learning process and outcomes contributes to my development as an educator and to improved learning outcomes. Currently, I am examining the influence of short-term study abroad on intercultural learning among health professions students. Recently, I published a manuscript comparing models of writing intensive course design.

References
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