HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY

Center for Teaching and Scholarly Excellence

CTSE

Official CTSE Newsletter | Spring 2009 | Vol. 5, No. 2

Thinking of Teaching a Course Online?

Some tips from colleagues who have already gone the distance ...

Photo by John McKeith

Distance education is flourishing at Hofstra.

Last summer, 242 students took distance learning courses through Hofstra, generating more then $600,000 in income for the University. This spring, the University is offering a dozen online courses, in subjects ranging from education to library sciences, and 13 new online courses for summer 2009 have been submitted to the Provost's Office for approval. Hofstra also offers a master's program in computer science and a certificate program in gifted education — both available entirely online.

The University is in good company. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), 62 percent of not-for-profit colleges and universities offered distance education in 2004-05. This represented 88 percent of public four-year institutions and 40 percent of private ones. A more recent Sloan Consortium study found that in fall 2007, more than one-fifth of U.S. college students were taking at least one online course. The number of online students is growing faster than overall college enrollment.

While most schools offer distance education, the NCES found less than 10 percent of full-time faculty members involved in online teaching. For faculty contemplating offering an online course, the obstacles — from technical to the time required — may seem daunting. Most importantly, many faculty wonder whether students will learn as well outside the classroom environment.

The question was explored at a recent CTSE panel, "Distance Learning: Does the Lack of Face-to-Face Interaction Lessen the Lesson?" Organized by management professors Janet Lenaghan and Debra Comer, the panel gave Hofstra faculty contemplating distance learning a

continued on page 8

IN THIS ISSUE

Classroom Lessons by ANDREA S. LIBRESCO

Helping students get the most out of their reading

Classroom Lessons is a new column that highlights examples of excellent teaching by our Hofstra colleagues. Each issue, Andrea Libresco, associate director for pedagogy at the CTSE, will visit a different classroom in search of effective teaching techniques that can be applied across disciplines. If you have a colleague whom you would like to volunteer for observation (or if you would like to volunteer yourself), please contact Dr. Libresco at Andrea.Libresco@hofstra.edu

I have often heard professors lamenting the lack of rich conversation in their classes. Indeed, after paper-grading, the aspect of teaching that may cause the most consternation is the struggle to get students to read in a focused, thoughtful way so that they contribute effectively to class discussion. I was fortunate to observe how my Curriculum and Teaching colleague, Dr. Linda Davey, tackled this challenge as she conducted a class that revolved around discussion of several chapters in Eric Jensen's *Teaching With the Brain in Mind*.

The challenge at the beginning of a class is to engage students — to give them a way to connect to the reading that they have presumably completed prior to class. The reading in Professor Davey's class focused on activities that stimulate thought and memory. Professor Davey asked students to memorize a song, "Ham and Eggs," that involved following directions with commands and tempos that repeatedly changed, as well as rhyme and repetition that, as Professor Davey pointed out, can influence memory and recall. The song physically and mentally challenged the group and called for focus, engagement and quick movement responses.

Professor Davey utilized the song to help students experience, and then discuss, ideas in the class readings that connected brain research to classroom strategies. As this was a three-hour class, the direct benefits of a change of position, increased oxygen intake, and unexpected activity also created conditions that have an impact on the ability to learn that are supported by findings in neuroscience. As part of the planning for this class session, Professor Davey, without explanation, rearranged the tables in the room into an unusual configuration and, after a period of time, encouraged the students to reflect on the impact that the environmental changes had on their attention, learning, stress and motivation. These first-hand experiences were aimed at helping students develop insight into findings in neuroscience, as well as understanding some ways in which brain research can be used in a purposeful way.

The song and the small group discussion that followed took a little more than 10 minutes of class time, but they served their purpose well; the students were able to make a text-to-world connection, which, in turn, illuminated some of the reading they might not have previously absorbed. In their groups, students spoke expansively of the importance of movement, music, repetition, and working on problems in the development of critical thinking skills, all of which were in the reading and were also present in the act of memorization in which they had just engaged.

Of course, just because students are engaged at the beginning of a discussion on the reading is no guarantee that they will remain so, especially if the reading was challenging. Professor Davey was aware of this potential problem; thus, she encouraged students to keep their books open during the discussion. She also referred to specific page numbers where certain ideas were found to give students another way to absorb the information and see how they might have missed some of the concepts when they did the reading at home.

To make students more careful readers, Professor Davey also highlighted pages in the reading where information on one page could be in conflict with information on a different page. In this interchange, Professor Davey's students grappled with such a conflict — that none of them had picked up on in their reading outside of class. It is also worth mentioning that Professor Davey was comfortable with "wait time"; in fact, the time between her first question below and a student response was a full eight seconds.

T: What did the book say about "intervals of learning" on page 116?

S: You need time in between learning new things.

S: Sustained learning can last only so long.

T: In second grade, 20-30 minutes is the interval of learning.

T: But now look at the chart [that shows a shorter interval of learning] on page 37 — it seems to be in conflict with p. 116 …

S: Page 37 says that for new content, the interval is 5-8 minutes.

S: Page 37 is talking about *new* content, as opposed to review.

T: Also, if you add in the time for movement and a hands-on activity, that makes up the difference in time.

T: What is the interval for adults?

S: 15-18 minutes.

T: So for little kids you have to change activities all the time, but, even for adults, you have to change pretty frequently.

S: *So why, in high school, don't they take this into account?*

T: Great question. Why?

S: Some concepts might take longer than 15-18 minutes to teach.

T: So what would Jensen say?

S: Do an activity to maximize the learning.

S: Time pressure that teachers are under keeps them moving too fast through material.

S: They are old-fashioned teachers and don't know this stuff.

T: But this information on learning was out when I was studying to be a teacher.

S: They don't want to change their ways.

T: Does anyone here ever have a donut for breakfast … even though you know it's not good for you? It's harder to choose a good breakfast - buying and preparing an organic egg … it's easier to grab a donut … It takes commitment and planning to create a variety of activities that address the optimal intervals of learning for each class period ….

There were other equally valuable interchanges based on specific information in the text, but I suspect my point has been made: Exploring particular passages from the text helped students think more deeply about the reading in class, as evidenced by the student who asked the thoughtful question as to why *her* teachers' instruction hadn't seemed to be based on the research on intervals of learning. But besides helping the students explore ideas in the text while they were in class, one hopes that activities such as these will help students have conversations with their texts as they read them outside of class.

It is worth noting that the discussion in this class was facilitated by the setup of the chairs and tables; they were arranged in a circle of sorts, so that every student could see every other student. All 20 students participated; more than half did so multiple times, and a third made at least four comments.

Near the end of the period, Professor Davey had students do a five-minute "quick-write" on "the important messages that you learned from Jensen that you didn't know before and that you can use as a teacher." She then had students get in small groups and put the ideas on chart paper posted around the room. Their lists included both detailed information ("a developing fetus generates 250,000 brain cells, so every second matters") and general concepts ("the emotional state of students has a direct impact on their learning capacity"). In the final five minutes of the class, the groups of students shared their findings with the rest of the class, building on each other's learning.

Throughout the class, Professor Davey's teaching choices were based on her understanding that, especially in the beginning of the semester, many of her students need help making meaning of the reading. Because she teaches future teachers, it is particularly important that her students become thoughtful readers. Of course, it could be argued that all our students need our help in becoming thoughtful readers, as they will live their lives in the Internet Age where, whatever profession they choose, there will be a premium on making sense of, and thinking critically about, vast quantities of information. Professor Davey's students clearly have an ally in that endeavor.

Andrea Libresco is associate professor of curriculum and teaching in the School of Education, Health and Human Services and associate director for pedagogy for the CTSE.

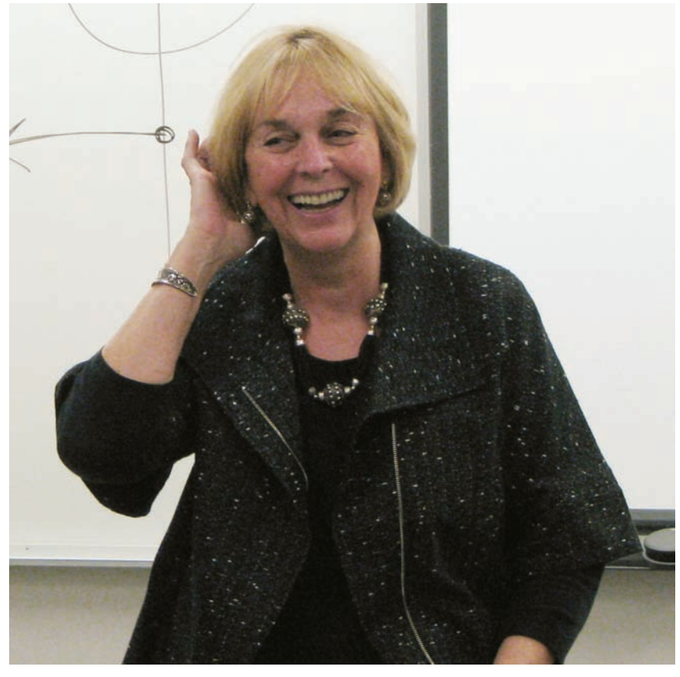


Photo by Erin Furman

Linda Davey enjoys a class in the School of Education, Health and Human Services.

Alternatives to Lecture by BRUCE TORFF

Asking the Right Questions

It's hard to exaggerate how important questions are for effective teaching. They are the lifeblood of teaching that makes students active in their learning. They organize in-class activities and discussion, as well as homework assignments and other assessments.

Questions come in two flavors: lower order and higher order. Lower-order questions are ones for which the answer is apparent in the course content. For example, students can answer the question,"What happened at the Roman port of Ostia in 68 BCE?" by scanning their textbooks and pulling out the right stuff. (A terrorist attack at Ostia shocked Romans into hastily trading liberty for security, leading to the destruction of their democracy.) Lower-order questions require students to *repeat* information given.

Unfortunately, lower-order questions comprise about 90 percent of the questions asked on college campuses.

Considerably rarer (and vastly more beneficial) are higher-order questions, which ask students to go beyond the information given — to think for themselves. These sorts of questions press students to come up with ideas not found in the text or lecture. How does the incident at Ostia compare to the attacks of 9/11? This question requires students to do more than just repeat information — students must think things through and come up with answers that are nowhere to be found in the class materials.

Both kinds of questions play a role in classroom teaching.

Lower-order questions face heavy criticism in the literature on education, for reasons I'll get to below. But they can be useful in your classroom, in moderation. Lower-order questions can help you cover key points you want to hammer home. Instead of lecturing on a point repeatedly to make sure students grasp it, use questions to get students to explain it to *you*, part of the time. Students can only hear you so many times when you repeat something. (If you have children, you know what I mean!)

Moreover, students speak each other's patois, and sometimes their professors don't. Key points may make more sense to students when their peers articulate them.

Still, lower-order questions have sharply limited classroom utility. They encourage students to regurgitate, not think. This is no small critique. History instruction, for example, ought not just require students to memorize names and dates; it also should teach them how to think and act like historians. To follow the Roman history example, students should ponder how current events can be better understood by considering past ones. When students compare and contrast Ostia and 9/11, they learn the skills of the historian, not just facts from the past. That's likely to make a much greater long-term impact on students.

How can higher-order questions work for you? (That one's higher-order!)

There are a lot of ways to slice the pie here, but the most common comes from the late Benjamin Bloom, an educational psychologist who in the 1950s developed the still-popular *Bloom's taxonomy*. (Benjamin Bloom ought not be confused with Harold Bloom, the conservative literary critic, who is still alive and kicking multiculturalists as I write this.)

The taxonomy starts with low-level cognitive skills: *knowledge* (simply being able to repeat something, even if you do not understand it) and *comprehension* (demonstrating some cursory understanding, such as being able to define a term).

Not much help there, so let's move on to the good stuff. Bloom's taxonomy also describes a quartet of higher-order cognitive skills.

The first, *application*, is exactly what it sounds like. If you have an idea or a principle, you can ask students to produce examples of it. In other cases you might ask students to apply an idea to a given situation. If you are teaching about evolution, you can ask students to select an organism and describe the processes by which it evolved.

The second is *analysis*. That's when you divide something into its constituents to determine what it contains, examine its parts, or study the nature of the whole. For example, you might ask students to read a legal brief and determine the ways in which its argument is relevant to the case at hand. Or you might ask students to defend their theory of the theme of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*.

Third comes *synthesis*, when you combine concepts or objects to create a new, unified

continued on page 9

From the Director

The Perception of Fairness

Photo by John McKeith

Dear Colleagues,

It is commonly accepted that among their other traits, good instructors are fair. Most instructors probably think they are fair to their students. Nevertheless, research has shown that students often think their instructors are not being fair to them. In a study conducted by Professor Rita Rodabaugh at Florida International University, 74 percent of faculty rated themselves as being among the "most fair," but only 12 percent of students rated them in the "most fair" category.

The perception that an instructor is unfair significantly affects students' satisfaction with the instructor and with their grades. Professor Rodabaugh's survey of more than 300 students indicates that students value fairness more than high grades or exciting instructors. Professor Rodabaugh concluded that no matter how interesting, innovative, and organized instructors are, if students perceive them as unfair, the instructors will be contributing to student dissatisfaction with college, increasing student attrition, and perhaps impeding students' achievement.

Among the practices that students consider indications of fairness are clear and consistent policies, standards, and assignments; impartiality in dealings with all students; a reasonable workload; exams that are related to lectures and do not contain "tricks"; and concern for students, as evidenced by respect in making corrections, maintaining privacy, and being available. Practices that offend students' ideas of fairness include not having standards (e.g., for submitting assignments on time, for taking make-up exams, for absences and lateness) that help differentiate among students; giving preferential treatment to some students; not monitoring collaborative learning groups sufficiently; ignoring cheating; and not returning exams or discussing them.

There are many books and articles listing specific techniques that encourage the perception of fairness in the classroom. Several are listed at right. One practice I find effective that is not generally mentioned is specifically telling students that I value fairness and that I try very hard never to disadvantage students who follow all the rules and work diligently.

Such forthrightness lets students know that the instructor shares their values. It also provides a reason acceptable to students for decisions they may not like very much. For example, the reason the instructor will not accept late assignments or give make-up exams (without an appropriate excuse) is that it is not fair to those students who had to work very hard to meet deadlines and who might have done better had they, too, been given more time. Similarly, severe penalties for cheating are fair because cheating that results in a better grade disadvantages students who do not cheat.

Sometimes, the most obvious teaching techniques can have the greatest impact. Using techniques that promote a perception of fairness among students can encourage student satisfaction and better course and teacher ratings.

Best wishes for a successful and enjoyable spring semester.

Susan

Susan Lorde Martin is director of the CTSE and the Cypres Family Distinguished Professor of Legal Studies in Business.

For More on Perceived Fairness:

Battle, Ken. The Case-Study Method, *GTP Handbook* (University of Colorado) (2002), available at www.colorado.edu/gtp/training/publications/handbook

Fairness in the Classroom, *Handbook for Graduate Teaching Assistants* (University of Nebraska - Lincoln), available at www.unl.edu/gradstudies/gsapd/resources/gta_handbook

Office of Instructional Consultation (University of California, Santa Barbara), available at www.oic.id.ucsb.edu/Resources/LargeClasses_fairness.html

Reed, Mark. *Fairness in the Classroom: Student Perceptions*, available at www.hhs.oregonstate.edu/courses/pac/guidebook/

Rodabaugh, Rita Cobb. *Institutional Commitment to Fairness in College Teaching* (1996).

Rodabaugh, Rita. *In the Name of the Student..., Essays on Teaching Excellence* (POD), available at www.orpheum.ctl.mnscu.edu/iteach/resources/pod/Packet6

Schmidt, Thomas A. The Impact of Voice and Justification on Students' Perceptions of Professors' Fairness, 25 *Journal of Marketing Education* 177 (2003)

Switzer, Ken. *How Do Your Students Perceive "Fairness" in Your Courses?*, available at blog.ecollege.com/WordPress/?p=5

University of Toledo, *On Fairness in Teaching* (2008), available at www.utoledo.edu/centers/ctl/teaching_resources

Wendorf, Craig A., and Sheldon Alexander. The Influence of Individual- and Class-Level Fairness-Related Perceptions on Student Satisfaction, 30 *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 190 (2005), available at www.sciencedirect.com

Whitley, Bernard E., et al. Fairness in the Classroom, *APS Observer* (Jul./Aug. 2000), available at www.psychologicalscience.org/teaching/tips_0700.html

Peer Observations: Beyond Evaluation

by JANET LENAGHAN

It is that time of year when many of us are asked to perform a "peer observation" of a colleague's class. For many, the prospect of conducting a peer observation is almost as stressful as being observed. How can you do a constructive, unbiased evaluation of a colleague with whom you've long worked side-by-side — and with whom you hope to continue working amiably in the future?

While Faculty Policy Series (FPS) #46 spells out the procedures for peer observations, I would like to touch here on a few unwritten aspects of these observations, which are, after all, an important component of performance management.

In doing a peer observation, faculty members often find it difficult to strike the right balance between what FPS #46 calls "formative" and "summative" procedures. Formative refers to that aspect of the observation used to "help instructors improve their teaching," while summative refers to the needed documentation of an individual's "ability as a teacher [which is] used primarily in personnel decisions." All too often, the latter consumes the lion's share of the observation process. The result is a tremendous missed opportunity. Those engaged in peer observation should be committed to helping develop, and not simply evaluate, a colleague. If the former is done properly, it takes care of the latter.

How can you conduct a peer observation with an eye toward development? Take time to review the observation form and, in your own mind's eye, delineate how you will behaviorally measure the dimensions listed. Anchoring each dimension in a behavior helps clarify your expectations. For example, if you are asked to measure the content of the presentation on a five-point Likert Scale, identify the type of activities that you would rate as optimal, and conversely, what would cause you to give the lowest rating. Perhaps this could be done at the departmental level to encourage greater participation, more uniformity, and greater specificity in keeping with each unit's mission.

In advance of your observation, meet with the colleague you are going to observe and discuss your expectations. Soliciting the your colleague's input in advance of your classroom visit might help alleviate some of his or her apprehension. There should not be any surprises when you complete the observation; the expectations need to be fully vetted prior to your classroom visit. It should be a highly transparent and participatory process.

Altering your perception of a peer observation from solely evaluative to an opportunity to provide constructive feedback is more than just semantics; it requires you to take a vested interested in your colleague's progress. While observing, try to note specific examples that illustrate your perception of your colleague's performance. Such examples are instrumental in explaining your comments on the observation. (For example, to help illustrate your evaluation of the level of class participation, you might note, "Professor responded to a student's comment by remarking about the high quality of her analysis."). Also, remember that engaging in active listening and using supportive body language will help reduce the anxiety of the person you are observing.

After the classroom visit, schedule a meeting with the colleague you observed to discuss your observations and thoughts. Refer to the specific examples you noted to support each suggestion. Tact is important, of course, but the content should not be filtered for concern over future strained relations. While difficult to criticize a colleague, if it is done with the goal of continuous improvement, it creates a supportive and accepting climate. Better for your colleague to have the opportunity to improve than to find, at a future critical personnel action date, that teacher ratings do not meet departmental standards.

Provide specific suggestions to encourage improvement. For example, if you noted that the instructor did not adequately use technology to enhance student learning,

you can provide examples of using technology in your own classes. It is also helpful to mention the available resources on campus for supporting faculty. The CTSE provides services such as confidential consulting, a public speaking consultant, videotaping of a class, and a host of similar programs to help promote effective teaching. The key to a constructive peer observation is to go beyond the identification of a problem to suggest solutions.

For those being observed this year, ask your observer to participate in the sort of discussions outlined above. Request an initial meeting where you can ask the observer what aspects of teaching effectiveness he or she will be looking for and what behaviors would exemplify each. Find out which dimensions of teaching are particularly important to the observer. A peer observation should not be viewed as something done *to* the person being observed, but rather as partnership between two colleagues with a common goal.

Janet Lenaghan is an assistant professor of management, entrepreneurship and general business in the Frank G. Zarb School of Business and a member of the CTSE.

Should Students Be Shielded From, or Treated to, Professors' Viewpoints?

by RALPH ACAMPORA

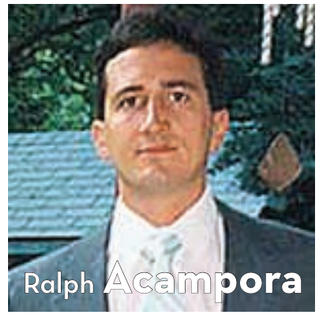
Many fields, especially in the humanities and social sciences, inevitably treat controversial subjects and matters about which there are differing opinions. When discussing such subjects in class, should faculty reveal their own views?

Last semester I facilitated a brown-bag discussion on neutrality and advocacy in the classroom. Some participants argued that faculty ought never to reveal their convictions in class, lest we unduly influence impressionable students who may be daunted by our authority. Others thought it was disingenuous to pretend that academic professionals aren't persons and citizens with their own views and carefully considered judgments on a variety of intellectual topics and public concerns.

These differences in what we consider the ideal professorial persona seem to be related to our divergent understanding of what constitutes objectivity. The standard account is that objectivity is the elimination of bias resulting from having a particular perspective; that is, objectivity transcends any particular standpoint — it is "the view from nowhere" or, if you are theologically minded, a "God's-eye view." A rival conception of objectivity claims, on the contrary, that none of us finite humans are divine, and any attempt to shed all perspective would not yield insight so much as blindness (no viewpoint, no view). Instead of transcending standpoints, this model seeks to multiply them: objectivity is approached as we diversify the different angles from which anyone might see a given phenomenon, a view from "manywhere" if you will.

When teaching under sway of the first model of objectivity, it makes sense to adopt an instructional posture of utter neutrality. But if one is inclined toward the second paradigm, it becomes plausible (perhaps even obligatory) for the teacher to add his or her own perspective to the mix of those contributed by assigned authors and participating students.

Speaking for myself, I confess an inclination toward the latter approach. While everyone participating in the brown-bag discussion wanted, rightly I think, to avoid proselytizing in the classroom, I nonetheless think it is valuable for us to model for students commitment based on critical reflection and judgment. If we don't do this, students may very well form the impression that scholarship is merely a



game of intellectual gymnastics whose practitioners feign insulation from life's callings and challenges and appear oddly isolated as a result — academic in the pejorative, rather than admirable, sense. Moreover, I've come to see that, on many if not most matters of contestation, not taking sides is ultimately impossible: the pretense of neutrality is a de facto vote for whatever happens to be the received wisdom — which was usually itself the product of considerable lobbying.

What is my own practice, then? Though I refrain from wearing convictions on my sleeves, especially in the early-going of a course, I do share some of my positions germane to class topics as the semester wears on, and I always inform individual students who ask about them outside of the classroom. Still, I think two caveats are important: most importantly, you must display a real readiness to change your own mind in light of further research and interaction with colleagues and students; also, you have to employ and advertise tactics to ensure fairness in grading (e.g., papers submitted with names on back to preserve anonymity until marks are recorded). If you keep these provisos in mind, no students should mistake professor for preacher as you reveal your views and demonstrate genuine argument.

Ralph Acampora is associate professor of philosophy and a member of the CTSE.

Thinking of Teaching a Course Online?

Some tips from colleagues who have already gone the distance ... *continued from page 1*

chance to hear from colleagues who had already tried teaching online.

Professor Peter Daniel, who has taught graduate and undergraduate biological statistics through distance learning, was delighted to discover that he spent "a lot more time interacting with students" in online classes than in conventional classes. "Students are less afraid to interact with the professor in online courses," he said. "They have no inhibitions about admitting they don't understand. I found myself being a lot like a tutor."

Professor Kaushik Sengupta taught operations management, a required course for business majors, entirely through Blackboard last summer. "There were clearly things I could do in the course that I could not do in a regular version of the course," he said. "I felt I ended up doing more knowledge-sharing with students." Sengupta used PowerPoint slides accompanied by an audio narration to teach quantitative lessons and asked students to watch YouTube videos to provoke lively conversations on the Blackboard Discussion Board. To assess how students were doing, Sengupta graded discussions and homework and used the new Blackboard GradeCenter to track when students last accessed the course. He also gave quizzes through Blackboard.

Some faculty members wonder how they would prevent cheating in online courses. Nationally, a wide range of solutions has been proposed, including having students log in with a thumbprint before tests, using motion sensors on home computers to detect the presence of another person in the student's room during exams, and requiring students to find a reliable proctor — a minister or member of the armed services, say — to witness their exam-taking. Panel participants relied on simpler solutions, such as giving timed tests and using the Blackboard "pool manager" feature, which selects test questions randomly from a pool of alternatives. Other online instructors restructured their courses to give less weight to tests, or simply permitted collaboration and the use of references during exams.

"Believe it or not, you get to know your students online," said Daniel, "so you get to know what they are capable of. Still, is there a way to ensure, absolutely, that students are doing their own work? No."

"For some faculty, that is a real show stopper," he added, noting that the decision to offer an online course "becomes a self-selecting process."

Which students opt to take an online course is also self-selecting — especially if instructors are prudent enough to spell out expectations at the beginning of the course. If students understand upfront that they will have to use discussion boards and wikis, manage their own progress, and spend at least as many hours on the online course as they would in a conventional class, they can make informed decisions about whether distance learning is for them.

"Students in the course understood the time and workload requirements when they selected to be in the course," said Sengupta. "This allowed them to get more out of such a course."

Even after students have enrolled in an online course, they need a lot of direction. "For many students, this is their first time taking an online course," said Ron Chalmers, senior instructional designer at Faculty Computing Services. Students must be taught skills such as using professional language in posts, creating Discussion Board comments that actually add value, and collaborating on wikis — skills that will serve them well after graduation.

"Students will need to deal with electronic communication when they get into the business world," noted Chalmers.

Other advantages of online education are obvious: the freedom to take courses in distant locations (students took Hofstra courses from China and California last summer; one instructor taught from Spain), the flexibility to study at night or on weekends (many students have internships or summer jobs), and freedom from high gas prices and long commutes. "I wouldn't have had time to do all the reading if I had to commute," a student noted in a survey Chalmers circulated among those enrolled in last summer's distance learning courses. "I learned faster ... I couldn't be a passive learner."

Developing a distance learning course can be time-consuming, but Faculty Computing Services partners with faculty in the endeavor (see "Teaching Online: How to Get Started" on page 9). "Recording all the PowerPoint presentations took a long time," said Daniel. "But the actual execution of the class was much less time consuming (than a conventional course) because all I was doing was responding to e-mails and grading."

Communicating frequently with students is vital, panelists all noted. "Most of my 'knowing' the students came through frequent e-mail exchanges," said Sengupta. "Often, there were multiple e-mails exchanged with a particular student. It is absolutely essential that you communicate with students on a daily basis during the course."

Many faculty who get involved in distance education find it gives them new ideas for their conventional classes. "Teaching an online learning course requires that you rethink how you are teaching," said Chalmers, "and it can have a positive ripple effect on your on-campus courses."

Added Chalmers: "For the most part, what we are finding is that faculty who teach online are coming back to do more."

Photo by John McKeith

Teaching Online: How to Get Started

by RON CHALMERS, Senior Instructional Designer, Faculty Computing Services

Hofstra has a process in place for approving, developing and teaching online courses. That process — a partnership between Faculty Computing Services (FCS) and the faculty — is described below.

APPROVAL: A faculty member who wants to develop and teach a course online must first submit an approval form, along with the course syllabus, to the department chair. (The form is available under "Curriculum Related Forms" at hofstra.edu/About/Administration/Provost/prov_forms.html.) The chair then routes the form to the dean, Faculty Computing Services and the Provost's Office for final approval.

Once the course is approved by the Provost's Office, course development can begin. Development usually takes place one or two semesters before the course is taught online for the first time.

DEVELOPMENT: The development process begins with the faculty member taking an online course (approximately five hours) that provides literature, references and links about best practices in online teaching and learning. It also includes a comprehensive overview of Blackboard.

Development occurs over several months. The faculty member and an instructional designer from FCS work together to develop the organizational structure of the online course, working from the syllabus. During this part of the process, decisions need to be made regarding:

- The tools and techniques that will be used by the faculty member to teach online (announcements, content, blogs, wikis, discussion board, live chat, assessments, etc.).
- What multimedia options will be used to create the lessons/modules (video, PowerPoint with audio, Captivate, Flash, simulations, etc.).
- Faculty expectations for student interactions and how much of the final grade these interactions will represent. (We recommend that everything the student is required to do be, in some way, part of the final course grade.)

The course should be COMPLETELY developed before the first day of teaching. This approach gives the instructor the time during the teaching term to focus on the students and make necessary adjustments to improve student learning.

TEACHING ONLINE FOR THE FIRST TIME: When the course actually begins, the faculty member is responsible for using the best-practice instructional techniques agreed upon in the development process. During the first term the course is taught online, the instructional designer observes the online course frequently, providing feedback and suggestions. Thus, the partnership between the faculty member and the instructional designer continues as the course is taught online.

Alternatives to Lecture by BRUCE TORFF

Asking the Right Questions *continued from page 4*

whole. An example of synthesis is provided above, when students are asked to compare and contrast the incident at Ostia and 9/11. Or you could ask students, "How might software for altering digital photographs be used in art photography?" Most acts described as "creative" stem from some kind of synthesis.

Finally is *evaluation*, when students judge the value, quality, or importance of something. This one's easy. You might ask students to consider how well an engineering idea is likely to work, and why. Or you could ask students to explain why a stock is (or is not) worth buying.

Questions that ask students to apply, analyze, synthesize, and/or evaluate make them active learners, not passive ones. This approach will work better if you are prepared. You might be a good in-class improviser, but questions planned in advance almost always cover important topics more quickly and clearly, and in appropriate detail.

Any questions?

Bruce Torff is a professor of curriculum and teaching, director of the Doctoral Program in Learning and Teaching in the School of Education, Health and Human Services, and pedagogical research consultant for the CTSE.

Having a Word with CAROL PORR

Bugbears and Bugaboos: Twenty worrisome words

I recently sent my colleagues an e-mail to inform them that I knew of a faculty member "that was interested in teaching a class." One of my friends jokingly chided me for using the relative pronoun *that* when I should have used the more personal *who*. After all, the faculty member to whom I referred was indeed a person, not a thing. That humorous exchange inspired this article.

Below are my picks for the words most often confused — in my students' writing and, apparently, in my own — and some tricks for finding the correct usage.

That vs. Who

While my colleague was right with regard to the use of *who* when referring to humans, I was not entirely wrong in using *that*. (Yes, I am guilty of the sin of pride and can't go down without a fight!) The relative pronoun *that* can be used for things or people. *Which* refers to things only. Still, in the case of my e-mail, I agree with my friend — *who* would have been better.

That vs. Which

When clauses are used to describe or define a noun or pronoun, they begin with the relative pronouns *that* or *which*. While many writers today don't make the distinction between the two, the rule is that the word *that* introduces a restrictive or an essential modifying clause and *which* does not. Consider the following sentence:

The papers that are written well impress professors the most.

The clause *that are written well* is essential for the meaning of this sentence, so we use the pronoun *that*. Essential, or restrictive, clauses require no commas to separate them from the rest of the sentence.

Now consider the following:

The papers, which are due on Monday, should be written well.

In this sentence, the clause *which are due on Monday* isn't necessary for the meaning of the sentence, even though, I admit, it certainly is necessary to remind students when papers are due!

Notice that the writer has enclosed this non-essential, or non-restrictive, clause in commas. The commas act as a road sign, if you will, to let the reader know that the information contained within them is not essential.

Note the difference in meaning between the following two sentences:

Sentence 1: *All papers that were handed in on Monday need to be rewritten.*

Sentence 2: *All papers, which were handed in on Monday, need to be rewritten.*

In Sentence 1, only the papers handed in on Monday need to be rewritten. Papers handed in on other days were apparently fine. In Sentence 2, all the papers have to be rewritten; they all just happened to be handed in on Monday.

If you find yourself using a *which* clause that you do not set off with commas, you probably should change the *which* to *that*.

Fewer vs. Less

The label on my America's Choice Pancake Syrup (yes, I buy generic) reads: "Fifty per-cent less calories than regular pancake syrup!" And signs at the grocery store cash registers read "Ten items or less." Both of these phrases use *less* incorrectly. The rule is: when talking about the number of things (that is, when referring to things that can be counted), use *fewer*. When talking about a quantity that cannot be counted, use *less*.

The label on the pancake syrup should have read "Fifty per-cent fewer calories than regular pancake syrup" because calories can be counted. Instead of using the light version of the pancake syrup, one could buy the regular brand and simply pour *less* syrup because calories can be counted, but syrup cannot! And the sign at the cash register should read "Ten items or fewer."

If you find you can use the adjective *many* with a noun, use *fewer* with that same word: *many* calories, *many* items and *fewer* calories, *fewer* items. If you use *much* with the noun, use *less* with that same word: *much* pasta, *less* pasta and *much* syrup, *less* syrup.

Lie vs. Lay

I recently had dinner with a cousin whom I hadn't seen in years. The first thing he asked me wasn't "How's your mom?" No, it was "Hey, what's the difference between lie and lay?"! I found myself trying to explain how a person or thing can lie, but one would have to lay (or place) something down, which is pretty much the difference between the two verbs.

I will try to simplify the rule here. *Lay* is a transitive verb, meaning it has a direct object — something or someone it is acting on:

I lay the book on the table each night.

The past tense of this verb is *laid*:

I laid the book on the table last night, but I can't find it now.

Lie is intransitive, meaning it does not take a direct object. Consider this:

I lie on the bed.

In this sentence, the bed is not directly receiving action of the verb the way the word *book* is in the previous sentence. Instead, the word *bed* is the object of the preposition *on*.

Here's where the confusion lies: the past tense of *lie* is *lay*. Thus:

I lay in bed all day yesterday.

If you've had trouble with this verb, you are certainly not alone. Constance Hale, author of *Sin and Syntax*, cites several instances of the lie/lay confusion. Even the Muppets committed the "sin" of confusing the two: one of their talking dolls said, "It feels good to lay down!" Hale reminds the reader that the Muppets are in good company. Bob Dylan sang "Lay Lady Lay," not "Lie Lady Lie"! (Gee, I wonder why?)

Well and Good

Good is an adjective; *well* is an adverb. The adjective *good* modifies nouns as in "She is a good student." *Well* is an adverb that modifies a verb or an adjective: "She is a good student because she studies well." We get into trouble when we confuse the two, as in "I did good on that grammar quiz!" Note, however, that *well* is an adjective when referring to health, as in "I feel *well* today."

Among vs. Between

Among and *between* are prepositions. Use *between* when it is used with two people or objects and *among* with more than two, as in:

Between the two girls, Mary is the smarter one.

Among the three of us, Mary is smartest.

There are always exceptions. You can't fly among Boston, New York, and Chicago! In a case like this one, *between* wins by default!

Affect/Effect/Impact

Affect is almost always used as a verb meaning to have an influence upon, or to have or use:

The subprime mortgage crisis affects the economy in a negative way.

He affects his audience whenever he speaks.

She affects an air of mystery.

When it is used as a noun, *affect* is a psychological term for a feeling or emotion, as in

The eyes of a shark display a lack of affect.

Effect, on the other hand, is usually a noun meaning anything that is brought about or the result of something:

The effects of the subprime mortgage crisis can be felt in every part of the country.

When it is used as a verb, however, *effect* means to produce or bring about:

It is hoped that the financial bailout will effect more confidence in the economy.

The word *impact* is a great example of how the English language is dynamic, not fixed. Traditionally, *impact* was considered a noun only. Stodgy curmudgeons will roll their eyes if they see this noun taking the form of a verb, but, let's face it, everyone does it now. Bryan Garner (*Garner's Modern American Usage*) attributes the widespread use of *impact* as a verb to the confusion over the differences between *affect* and *effect* (*impact* is used instead of *affect*):

The students concluded that their egregious absences impacted (read affected) their low grades.

If you prefer to be old-fashioned, use the phrase "have an impact on."

Like vs. As

For those of you who are as old as I, remember the cigarette slogan "Winston tastes good like a cigarette should"? I don't recall the cigarette advertisement being criticized for encouraging smoking, but it sure did get itself into trouble with English teachers throughout the country for using a preposition where a conjunction should have been.

Like is a preposition, and as such it takes a noun or pronoun as its object:

Tina Fey looks like Sarah Palin.

Like Sarah Palin is a prepositional phrase.

As, on the other hand, is a conjunction and would be followed by a clause:

As I said, Tina Fey looks like Sarah Palin.

As I said is a clause.

The abovementioned slogan should have been "Winston tastes good as a cigarette should."

"Irregardless"

"Irregardless" is not a word — don't use it! The correct term is *regardless*.

Regard vs. Regards

Another common error is "in regards to" or "with regards to." The correct phrases are *with regard to* and *in regard to*. You can give *regards* to your nearest and dearest, but when you are referring to something, you must use the singular form of the noun. You can avoid the whole dilemma by saying *regarding*.

Alright

All wrong! *All right* is two words.

By now you should know that I could go on and on, but I suspect I should stop now. All right?

Carol Porr is adjunct assistant professor of English and assistant director of the English Composition Program. She is also the English editing consultant to the CTSE.

HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY
Hempstead, New York 11549

Current CTSE Members

Jacqueline Burke (Accounting, Taxation and Legal Studies in Business), 2007-2010

Timothy Daniels (Anthropology), 2007-2010

Dietmar Heidemann (Philosophy), 2008-2011

Janet Lenaghan (Management, Entrepreneurship and General Business), 2006-2009

Christopher Matthews (Anthropology), 2006-2009

Daisy Miller (English), 2007-2010

Jennifer Rich (English), 2006-2009

Mohammed Tafti (Information Technology/ Quantitative Methods), 2006-2009

Daniel Tinkelman (Accounting, Taxation, and Legal Studies in Business), 2008-2011

Elizabeth Venuti (Accounting, Taxation and Legal Studies in Business), 2006-2009

Kathleen Wallace (Philosophy), 2006-2009

David Weiss (Health Professions and Family Studies), 2007-2010

Staff and Contact Information

Director
Susan Lorde Martin, J.D.
Cypres Family Distinguished Professor of Legal Studies in Business
208 Weller Hall
Phone: (516) 463-5327
Fax: (516) 463-6505
E-mail: Susan.L.Martin@hofstra.edu

Associate Director for Communications
Carol Fletcher, M.A.
Associate Professor of Journalism
403 New Academic Building
Phone: (516) 463-6464
E-mail: Carol.T.Fletcher@hofstra.edu

Associate Director for Pedagogy
Andrea Libresco, Ed.D.
Associate Professor of Curriculum and Teaching
128 Hagedorn Hall
Phone: (516) 463-6543
E-mail: Andrea.S.Libresco@hofstra.edu

Senior Assistant
Jeanne Racioppi, B.A.
200 West Library Wing
Phone: (516) 463-6221
Fax: (516) 463-6505
E-mail: Jeanne.Racioppi@hofstra.edu

English Editing Consultant
Carol Porr, M.A.
Adjunct Instructor of English
Assistant Director, Composition Program
208 Calkins Hall
Phone: (516) 463-5252
Fax: (516) 463-6505
E-mail: Carol.J.Porr@hofstra.edu

Pedagogical Research Consultant
Bruce Torff, Ed.D.
Associate Professor of Curriculum and Teaching
128 Hagedorn Hall
Phone: (516) 463-5803
Fax: (516) 463-6196
E-mail: Bruce.A.Torff@hofstra.edu

Program Evaluator
Marc Silver, Ph.D.
Professor of Sociology
202F Davison Hall
Phone: (516) 463-5645
Fax: (516) 463-6505
E-mail: Marc.L.Silver@hofstra.edu

Public Speaking Consultant
Cindy Rosenthal, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Teaching Fellow,
School for University Studies
107 Roosevelt Hall
Phone: (516) 463-4966
Fax: (516) 463-4822
E-mail: Cindy.D.Rosenthal@hofstra.edu

Quantitative Analysis Consultant
Michael Barnes, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology
101 Hauser Hall
Phone: (516) 463-5179
Fax: (516) 463-6505
E-mail: Michael.J.Barnes@hofstra.edu

15622:1/09