

2010-2011 Seminar Participants

"Enhancing the Community-Based Learning Component of CO419/Mediated Communication Theory through Curriculum Development and Assessment"

Prof. Angela Paradise

I am applying to participate in the Teaching and Learning Strategies Seminar during the fall semester of 2010 so that I may explore ways in which I can expand upon and strengthen the community-based learning (CBL) component of my course, Mediated Communication Theory (CO419). Over the last two semesters, my CO419 students have volunteered at Davis Commons, an after-school program in Brockton where they serve as "media literacy facilitators." This project requires my students to create and lead lessons and activities with young people between the ages of 10 and 14, with the goal of encouraging the after-school students to think critically about media messages.

While I am pleased with our CBL partner site and my students' work there, I believe that my course's CBL component would benefit from a more structured media literacy curriculum and the creation of an assessment tool to measure the effectiveness of our media literacy work at Davis Commons.

Participating in the TLSS will provide me with the opportunities to read additional literature pertaining to CBL, curriculum development, and assessment strategies, as well as engage in discussions about these topics with other professors. Further, strengthening my course's CBL component will enhance the educational experience of my students, and improve the learning experience of the Davis Commons students.

Project Description:

As noted above, my class currently volunteers at Davis Commons, where they engage after-school students in critical discussions pertaining to the media (e.g., gender portrayals in media, television violence, deceptive advertising, Internet safety, etc...). Our CBL program lasts ten weeks and I typically have two groups of Stonehill students visiting twice a week for a total of 20 visits per semester. One observation that I have made, as evident by feedback from my students as well as in discussions with the Davis Commons' site coordinator, is that our CBL partnership would benefit from a more structured media literacy curriculum for the after-school students.

Currently, the students in my course create the lesson plans and I help to guide them in this process. Unfortunately, creating, modifying, and editing their 20 lesson plans require an enormous amount of class time, which does not leave us with as much time as I would like to discuss the course readings pertaining to mediated communication theories. In order to make our class time most productive and add structure to the CBL program, I will pursue the following goals as a TLSS participant:

I will create a booklet of "recommended" media literacy lesson plans that will complement our course material as well as guide future CO419 students in their work at Davis Commons.

As part of the aforementioned lesson plans, I will also create a corresponding activity booklet that each after-school program student will receive and utilize as part of their participation in our media literacy CBL project.

Finally, I will design an assessment tool to help measure the effectiveness of our media literacy work at the after-school program. Such a tool will provide valuable information for both media literacy and CBL scholars.

Thus, by the end of my semester as a TLSS participant, I will have these tools in hand to implement in future sections of Mediated Communication Theory.

Benefits:

Many benefits would stem from my participation in TLSS. First, future CO419 students would benefit from having pre-existing lesson plans to guide their work at Davis Commons. This would allow for more productive use of class time and more in-depth discussions about theories and how they apply to students' observations at Davis Commons. Second, the after-school students would benefit from a more comprehensive, structured learning experience. Third, I am confident that this CBL project can serve as a model for other professors hoping to do similar work; thus, I hope to share my experiences (through journal publications, conference presentations, on-campus events, etc.) so that faculty interested in CBL or media literacy (or both) can benefit. Finally, I believe my participation in TLSS would enhance my knowledge and strengthen my teaching skills, while at the same time allowing me to reflect on and incorporate these experiences into future publications and presentations.

Community Outreach Plans:

I would welcome the opportunity to lead a Brown Bag discussion or an Academic Development Day session to share my thoughts and experiences with my Stonehill colleagues. I also hope that my work can help pave the way for implementing similar media literacy-themed CBL programs in other after-school programs and K-12 classrooms in the surrounding community and beyond.