

2012-2013 Seminar Participants

"Active Learning Pedagogy"

Prof. Ginger Meng

Rationale:

There are two types of methodologies of learning: teacher based and student based. My practice of teaching so far has largely been the former, the more traditional type. Although I try hard to spice up the "dry" theories with exercises, stories, and jokes, I feel the students are still not quite engaged, especially, a lot of times the subject seems to be far from their real life. This makes them think less deeply, avoid taking risks, and lose interest in the learning itself. Therefore it has been a constant question I ask senior colleagues: how to involve students and connect them to the subject matter they learn about?

Then I got fascinated by the idea of student based teaching, a system that the students are given the information without explaining its content but are asked to arrange and make associations with the information to experience meaningful relationships by using active learning techniques. It's a different philosophy and is personally challenging for me as an instructor. A lecture is most often a monologue, while active learning is a dialogue or a multilogue: between student and teacher, student and student, student and subject matter, and even between student and her/himself. It brings more dynamic into the classroom however becomes less predictable and harder to control. I would like to take the opportunity of participating in the TLSS to learn more about active learning.

Project Description:

Active learning is comprised of a student centered environment which raises student's motivational level to stimulate thinking and go beyond facts and details. What are the different techniques established in active learning but within a pedagogical framework? How can active learning methodology be implemented to assure that a student learns? How effective are the active learning strategies? These are some of the questions I want to explore and apply to my own classrooms.

My proposal will have two parts: first I want to read into literature since my knowledge in this area is limited. I plan to explore learning theories on active learning, paying particular attention to some of the specifics of active pedagogy, including the choice of activities, concrete strategies of how to enable learning, how to involve students and keep them involved, how and when to use different learning modes (alone, in groups, writing, discussion, etc.), and so on.

The reading starts with the following:

Active Learning for the College Classroom, Paulson and Faust, California State University, Los Angeles, 1998.

Classroom Activities for Active Learning, Center for Faculty Excellence, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2009.

Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research, Prince, 2004.

Second, a more specific goal for my project is to apply the theories I learn to a new course and syllabus design. I am preparing for a new LC course with Professor Carver, with an integrated seminar

component regarding "risk". Past experience on similar courses tells me that students usually do well on the two other separate courses, however when they go to the seminar course, they get lost because the idea of risk is just too far away for the young kids to consider. I hope by adopting various active learning techniques it will help students develop interest hence get optimal outcome from classroom.

Benefit:

Finance, the subject I teach, has not stimulated much active learning. For example, Kalogeras(1976) argues that good old-fashioned lectures offer an appealing medium for transferring knowledge and conveying a sense of intellectual excitement from instructor to students. He suggests that lectures are also efficient, considering the demands that content, coverage, and constant change in the discipline place on finance instructors. Blevins (1980) points out that lecture can be used to effectively survey the structure of knowledge in a particular area as well. The lack of pedagogical grounding for active learning methodology brings both challenge and opportunities.

I see significant benefits from the participation in the TLSS. First, through exploration of pedagogical issues and discussion with other seminar participant enhance my professional development as an educator. Then in turn students will benefit from my improved instruction. Moreover my departmental colleagues could benefit from the lessons that I learn.

Community Outreach Plan:

I would be happy to have the opportunity to share my findings and the experience in the TLSS with seminar participants and colleagues in the Business department, and be involved in faculty-wide discussion of teaching and learning, in teaching round-tables or academic development days to come. By applying the pedagogy in the classroom we reach out to the students.

Reference:

Blevins, D.R. "A Student's Guide to the Case Method," *Journal of Financial Education*, (Fall 1980), pp. 66-73.

Kalogeras, G. "In Defense of the Lecture Method of Instruction," *Journal of Financial Education*, 5, (1976), 45-57.