Thursday 1:45 Presentations

Modeling with Excel for Students not Majoring in Economics

Mostafa Moini

The differences that exist, among the students who do, and those who do not major in economics, with respect to their interests and academic preparations, create unique pedagogical challenges for the instructors teaching at the undergraduate and MBA levels. This has important ramifications concerning the quality and scope of applications of economic principles within the economy. For the resources at the disposal of any institution, public or private, for-profit or otherwise, would be allocated more effectively the more informed the decision makers are about the basic concepts of economics. Economic education of the non-majors is the most important opportunity economists have for providing the non-specialist with a working knowledge of field. The opportunity may be used more effectively thru heuristic methods rather than by means of the formal pedagogies that are suitable for the majors. Excel is a potent tool for teaching/learning economics heuristically.

How Does the Use of Photo-Journaling as a Reflective Tool Inform Preservice Teacher Educators’ Field Experience?

Dr. Christina Walton

The central question: “How Does the Use of Photo-Journaling as a Reflective Tool Inform Preservice Teacher Educators’ Field Experience?” Reflective learning is “what a teacher does when he/she looks back at the teaching and learning that has occurred, and reconstructs, reenacts, and/or recaptures the events, the emotions, and the accomplishments” (Shulman, 1987, p. 19). A Journaling reflection of learning experiences places students more in control of their learning (Gregory, 2005). Photographs, as a tool, enhance reflection and provide artifact evidence for professional dispositions.

Evidence: I am gathering literature review articles related to reflective practice, journaling, and photography in educational learning environments, and possible sources for providing cameras. Findings will be important because reflective photo-journaling improves students’ ability to evaluate their teaching and self-regulate learning.

Method: A comparative study of change design and reflective inquiry used with mixed method data collected from 20-30 preservice language arts students.
Designing Your Own Non-Profit Organization:  
The Application of Theory to Practice

Mike McMullen, Ph.D.

My CASTL project will expand on a semester-long exercise whereby graduate students in a Complex Organization class design their own non-profit organization (NPO), including all of the components based on the theory we learn in class (i.e., boards of directors, mission statements, fundraising plans). I have two major gaps that I hope to explore. First, I need to develop a metric or rubric to measure how well students apply organizational sociology theory to the development of their own NPO. In the past, I have graded their portfolios as a whole, but want to develop better criteria for measuring students' application of theory and critical thinking skills. Second, I think it would benefit students if they could more intentionally learn through this assignment that they not only create an NPO, but in the process of thinking about boards of directors, fundraising, and membership qualifications, they are developing other, more global skills: leadership, team-building, and professional management competence.

Emancipatory Action Research in Accounting

Marsha Huber

I will use action research to investigate the issue of improving student learning in my classes. The focus of my study is to examine the effect of testing strategies on student learning.

I encountered a problem in my classes with my students failing exams. There is a theory of self-regulation that provided a possible explanation to what was occurring in my classes. Tuckman (1992) categorized students into three groups with one group, self-doubters, performing poorly on exams.

I gathered evidence by asking the Director of our Center for Learning to do an "intervention" to discuss this problem with my students. I also used journaling to learn more about my students' thoughts. I would like to adopt an instrument to help me classify students into the self-regulation categories. I am still working on "how" and "when" to offer tests so to maximize student learning.
Draft to Mastery Process in ASL-English Interpretation

Carly J. Flagg-Campbell and Angela Malcomson

To mirror authentic performance tasks for sign language interpreters, interpreter education has traditionally employed unfamiliar texts and few opportunities for the practice, rehearsal and revision cycle which other fields value to produce high quality products. We hope to explore the merit of repeated practice as a means to transfer understanding of knowledge and skills to real world situations. Instructor observation of students' abilities and student self-assessment will be used to evaluate the curriculum design. Student self-assessments will provide evidence of developing abilities to think critically about their work, identify skill deficits and design plans for improvement. By making transparent the skills needed for independent evaluation and successful performance, we expect to see improved application of skills and knowledge to unhearsed settings. Comparing students in classrooms that employ Draft to Mastery process to those that use more traditional methods will allow us to observe the changing dispositions of our students.
Thursday 3:30 Presentations

Enhancing Movement Diagnosis Skills of Teacher Candidates

Patty Hacker

How can a teacher preparation program enhance the motor development knowledge (and thus application) for early “diagnosis” of developmental movement delays of early learners? This knowledge can help offset later academic stress in reading readiness, language skills and writing skills, which are the foundation of academic success. The SMART/Boost Up program (a method for tracking motor development) has a solid theoretical foundation, and studies have been conducted in other programs researching its effect on reading readiness and improvement of reading at the first grade level.

The method of investigation for this project will be quasi-experimental, utilizing a lab school kindergarten class as subjects. Teacher preparation students will be the “investigators,” using the kindergarten students to enhance comprehension of motor development, and thus application to teacher choices.

Sources of evidence to be examined will include observations, documentation of KWL and content analysis of reflective journal writing.

Student Learning in Educational Foundations (Online and Large Class)

Wendy S. Miner, Donna Rhinesmith, and Jared Wagenknecht

Description of Work in Progress:
Based on comments from reviewers, our study question has become: In what ways does student learning change between the two formats (online and large class)?

We are examining student learning outcomes from the surveys already collected and analyzed, course grades, final paper grades, and enrollment numbers. We are creating focus groups from the students (if possible) who were in the courses to add qualitative data. We have thought about the large class focus on issues versus the online focus on modes (e.g., historical, legal, etc.).

We have mixed methodology. We ran descriptive information and independent sample t-test on survey data. We will run frequencies on grades and enrollment figures. We will look for patterns in the qualitative data once gathered.
Assessing Civic Attitudes Among Bachelor's Level Social Work Students

Heather Kanenberg, Ph.D., LMSW

Teaching social policy in the 21st Century can be perplexing when it is contextualized with the political realities of the day. While in the classroom, students are participatory and engaged – does this engagement translate into their personal civic attitudes and values? The purpose of this study is to examine the interconnectedness between Undergraduate Social Work Public Policy Courses and students' civic attitudes and values. Several sources of data will be used investigate these relationships including responses to The Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (quantitative), and The Americorps Baseline Survey (quantitative), as well as Reflective Journals (qualitative) and possibly video-taped focus groups (qualitative). The Public Policy courses are structured such that they must be taken sequentially by all students in the BSW allowing for a within subjects repeated measure design.

Title: On Philosophical Evidence-Mindedness: Understanding What Philosophers Do (and How Students Can Learn to Do the Same)

Stephen Shulman

Building on my previous work examining the teaching of philosophical evidence-mindedness, my current project attempts to more clearly articulate what philosophical evidence-mindedness is and the developmental stages to achieving it. My primary method for gathering evidence is through think-alouds: in a think-aloud, a person is asked to read or solve a problem or recount information and to do so while saying out loud everything that is going on in her "mind." I began experimenting with the use of think-alouds this year and have been video-and audio-taping students, philosophy faculty, non-philosophy faculty and graduate students doing them. While I have found the think-alouds quite revealing, I have not yet discovered a systematic way of looking at the evidence I have gathered. The problems that I face, and what I cannot yet answer, is how to use and glean evidence from think-alouds philosophically, rather than scientifically or social scientifically.
The Impact of Creative Practice on Critical Thinking Skills in a First-Year Seminar

Robert C. Lagueux

My project investigates how the development of critical thinking processes among students in a first-year seminar is impacted by the production of artistic-creative projects. In our program, students respond to a series of Big Questions through a portfolio of creative projects; each is accompanied by a written Artist's Statement in which students articulate how the project reflects a purposeful, reflective engagement with the question it addresses. In order to provide a baseline for subsequent phases of the project, I developed a rubric for use in analyzing a sample of student Artist's Statements to look for evidence that students have achieved four of the course learning goals. I am attempting to pair a quantitative analysis of the degree to which each of the four selected learning goals is achieved in these projects with a qualitative description of kinds of assignment frames that elicited the most evidence of that critical thinking.
Friday 10:15 Presentations

Professional Development for Undergraduate Science Students: Teaching and Assessing Professional Scientific Writing

Peter J. Alaimo and Joseph Langenhan

We have developed a program to prepare chemistry students to write a scientific journal article in the style and format of a professional scientist.

Our central questions are: when sophomores have learned professional writing, (i) to what extent do their learning gains transfer to other coursework, and (ii) to what extent does this help graduates move beyond issues of mere professional competencies to transform them into scholarly colleagues.

Our assessment plan involves three levels. The first level uses rubrics to assess writing skills and a self-assessment survey. The second level assesses transfer of writing skills to advanced coursework. The third level measures program effectiveness on the development of scholarly attitudes in our graduates. This assessment is important because it monitors the progression of learning through our curriculum. We will use standard statistical analysis to process rubric data.

Does the Approach To Teaching Public Relations Writing Produce Career-Ready Students?

Sandra Allen and Mark Perlman

Public relations (PR) professionals and educators agree: as a specialized discipline, PR writing is fundamental to a student's academic success and professional career. Foundational work for this project began in fall 2005, when the news release was identified and validated as the primary tool of PR. Student news releases were evaluated in 2006 and 2007, and though results indicated increased student learning, we could not identify specific pedagogical “hows” and “whys” that contributed to the ratings. During the past 8 months, we have utilized in-class peer observations, examined syllabi and assignment sheets, and surveyed PR Writing instructors to compare aspects of the pedagogy. We have recently validated a process, and have developed, a rubric for teaching and assessing news release writing. Yet, key questions remain: (1) How does pedagogy develop PR writing skills?; (2) How does the individual instructor's approach affect student growth in the discipline?; and, (3) Is it possible to connect the dots between the pedagogy and the students' learning?
Do Personal Response Systems Increase Student Learning?

Andrew Healy

Personal response systems, also known as clickers, offer the hope of creating an interactive classroom environment, particularly in introductory math and science classes. I intend to determine the extent to which clickers increase student learning. To accomplish this objective, I will build on some current research that has used experimental methods to determine the effectiveness of teaching strategies. Since there are many variables that affect student learning outcomes, controlled experimentation is likely to be the only way to identify the causal effects of different teaching strategies. In this project, I intend to vary the usage of clickers across two identical classes of introductory statistics that I teach. The results should provide new insight into the role that clickers can play in increasing student retention and learning.

What We’re Doing When We Say We’re Doing “Critical Reflection”

Amy Rupiper Taggart and H. Brooke Hessler

As writing specialists, we believe reflective writing and research are key tools to develop critical reflection (socially situated, not solely internal) and that critical reflection is a key to good research. In our research writing classes, then, we have adopted and adapted Stephen Brookfield’s Critical Incident Questionnaire, a formative assessment tool, in combination with learning portfolios, to enhance and complement the research assignments. From the data collected in the CIQs and learning portfolios, we hope to discover patterns in student reflection that will help us build appropriate scaffolding toward something more like critical reflection, the kind of reflection that leads to more meaningful engagement with communities beyond the classroom. To examine and track the patterns, we will apply categories of reflection developed by Hatton and Smith (1995), expanding and adapting them based on new patterns discovered in this data.
Teaching Non-Western Literary Traditions at a Small Non-Traditional University

Shreerekha Subramanian, Ph.D.

"How do you think knowledge you gained in this class might be handy? What particular areas of literary or mythic tradition have been particularly revelatory to you? Has any material been transformative for your own life?" In teaching literatures and mythologies originating from non-western traditions as part of a mandatory humanities regimen at our small satellite university that caters to non-traditional students, I have been constructing a coherent pedagogy that will help my students comfortably grapple with scriptural and literary works that are categorically dismissed as "difficult" or "alien" or "politically loaded," works as varied and pluralistic as the Qur'an, Rumi's poetry, Edward Said's theories, or a contemporary novel such as Mohsin Hamid's The Reluctant Fundamentalist. Thus far, I have gathered two sets of qualitative data that assesses how effective the course content has been in dispelling stereotypes and myopic manners of reading the world.
Friday 1:30 Presentations

Authentic Inquiry: Beyond the Conventional Senior Paper

Kerry Bostwick, Jean Donham and Jill Heinrich

How can we disrupt largely positivist research paradigms that have precluded many students from engaging and experiencing ownership in the research processes? What might we, as teachers, do to facilitate the transition from traditional research reporting to a disposition of inquiry that allows for ambiguity and discovery in the research process?

Evidence will be gathered throughout the course of a qualitative research project; documents will include a pre- and post-student questionnaire, analytic field notes recorded during small focus-group discussions and the final research project itself. Particular analysis will center upon the conclusion of the paper, determining the extent to which students offered either a summary of existing knowledge or a new discovery. Through analysis of these documents, we hope to determine whether students experienced a paradigm shift regarding the research process. Specifically, we hope to gauge any transition from positivist research reporting to a disposition of inquiry that is grounded in curiosity and affords a more unique type of ownership in the research project.

Teaching and Assessing Professional Dispositions: Service Learning and Diversity Dispositions for PK-12 Administrator Candidates

Kay A. Keiser, Ed.D. and Laura E. Schulte, Ph.D.

Based upon studies of teacher and administrator dispositions conducted at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, candidates in the educational administration course sequence need a stronger foundation in professional and community connections. Administrators who have not developed positive dispositions have trouble being the leader of an effective school.

All administrative candidates complete EDAD 8050 School Community Relations during which they are involved in simulations, reading, discussion, case studies, lectures, and 9 hours of service learning. Currently, candidates chose their own service learning site, and thus have a wide variety of experiences.

The purpose of this study will be to explore the effect of service learning on the diversity dispositions of preservice administrators. The Diversity Dispositions Index (DDI) will serve as pretest and posttest. Candidates also submit personal and professional reflections upon their service learning experiences.
Examining the Development of Dispositions for Professional Teaching: One Teacher Candidate’s Journey

David Carroll

How are emerging dispositions for professional teaching evident in the participation and performances of one teacher candidate, and how does studying her experience help inform the construction of a provisional conceptual framework for understanding the development of dispositions? Since March, 2006, I have been conducting a research project tracking 20 pre-service teacher candidates as they have moved through the teacher education program at my institution. I have collected admissions materials, assignments, practicum evaluations, and student teaching evaluations, and interviewed each individual three times across that experience. I have generated a provisional conceptual framework for understanding the development of dispositions. I am now beginning the systematic analysis of data for one of the first candidates to proceed all the way through. I am using the “constant comparative method” of qualitative analysis, starting with headings derived from my provisional conceptual framework.

Help, I’m Not The Grammar Police!

Michelle B. Kunz

The purpose of this project is to determine how writing assignments in marketing courses can be redesigned to improve the quality of student papers. Writing skills are essential for the professional success of business students, but students do not seem to associate the class writing assignment with development of future professional skills. The project will examine how writing assignments can be redesigned to facilitate student engagement, improve motivation, and the overall quality of writing. The primary issues to be addressed are the “mechanics” of grammar and composition. Project questions are:

1. How can the importance of writing skills be conveyed to students?
2. How can the importance/necessity of correct grammar in writing assignments be conveyed to students?
3. How can assignments be re-designed to facilitate better writing?
4. What tools can be provided to assist students in generating better quality writing assignments?
Assessing the Objectivity of Evaluations Done By Student Teams

Bart Ward

The ability of professional teams to objectively appraise whether evidence supports an hypothesis in big science, or a theory in complex litigation, or design criteria in mega construction projects make good team-based appraisal skills ever more valuable. Here, the central question is whether a particular approach to appraising critical memos prepared by student teams can be used to adjudge the rigor and objectivity of these student teams’ assessments of the work of peers. The project requires student teams to review homework solutions done by their peers. Teams prepare analytic memos setting out criteria for evaluation and assessment of the strengths and weakness of an entire set of homework. Accordingly, teams report their assessment results in memo form and designate the outstanding paper for each assignment reviewed. Instructor comparisons of student work with expert solutions to each assignment are used to assess the degree of rigorous objectivity of team memos.