

Panel  
New Approaches to Student Engagement  
Albert T. Watanabe (Louisiana State University), co-organiser  
Jane Poynter Webb (Louisiana State University) co-organiser

This panel consists of papers which present pedagogical approaches designed to enhance the learning environment through formal student presentational opportunities in both language classes and Classical Studies classes. The presenters are approaching this idea from two directions, the Communication Intensive approach and the “reacting” pedagogy. The papers here are designed to demonstrate that

- (1) when students assume more responsibility for learning the material, they learn with greater depth and retention,
- (2) preparing for a presentational format which will be subject to peer review and evaluation along with faculty evaluation automatically fosters more careful preparation, and
- (3) the depth of research and understanding automatically fosters a better retention of the material.

The panel hopes, furthermore, to promote a regular dialogue between and among users of these pedagogies to constantly refresh and invigorate their respective classrooms through shared successes, commonly identified problems, and collectively considered solutions.

Audio-visual equipment: digital projector for computerized presentations

Games Students Play: "Reacting to the Past" and Student Engagement in Learning  
Carl A. Anderson (Michigan State University)  
T. Keith Dix (University of Georgia) co-presenters

*Reacting to the Past* is a pioneering pedagogy consisting of elaborate historical games, in which students are assigned "roles" with "victory objectives" informed by classic texts in the history of ideas. Pioneered by Mark Carnes, Professor of History at Barnard College, and first offered at Barnard in the fall of 1995, *Reacting* won the 2004 Theodore Hesburgh Award for pedagogical innovation. More than 160 colleges and universities are now offering *Reacting* classes. Student reaction has been overwhelmingly positive, with many commenting on the unique nature of the courses, on how historical experience became personal experience in the games, and on how the pedagogy led to a better understanding of historical development and causation and a sense of how history might easily have turned out differently.

One of the most important aspects of *Reacting* pedagogy (and one of the most obvious to the outside observer) is that classes are for the most part student-led, and students do most of the talking in class. The instructor performs the conventional tasks of grading students' oral and written work and conducting classes to introduce and conclude the game. The instructor also serves as "Gamemaster," running the game, advising students on matters of game strategy, and ensuring that the game is historically credible. Once the game begins, students run the class themselves. In order to achieve their objectives, students must not only hone their writing and speaking skills to become effective speakers in the classroom, they must also practice social skills and learn the value of teamwork and the art of consultation and negotiation. The burden of historical knowledge also falls on the students in the course of a game. When a student asks a vexing question or proposes a new scenario, the Gamemaster can refer the student to appropriate historical resources.

The "Reacting" pedagogy began with a game based on the ancient world, *The Threshold of Democracy: Athens in 403 B.C.*, and two more ancient games are in development, *Beware the Ides of March: Rome in 44 BCE* and *Constantine and the Council of Nicaea: Defining Orthodoxy and Heresy in Christianity, 325 CE*. The paper describes the speaking and writing components in the games that deal with classical antiquity, reviews various curricular applications for these games, and suggests how they might be adapted to fit the curricular goals of individual instructors.

Caesar, The Master Communicator, As A Tool for CxC  
Jane Poynter Webb (Louisiana State University)

Although Communication across the Curriculum (CxC) pedagogy has been around for some time, our university has updated the idea in an attempt to encourage course work which dramatically improves a student's communication skills in today's world. The university desired to have a group of courses from across the general curriculum available to students interested in graduating as Distinguished Communicators, a designation which indicates they have taken a minimum of 6 CxC courses and have a digital portfolio of their undergraduate work available for graduate school applications, professional school applications, or job applications. Latin and Classical Studies courses seemed a logical addition. A large number of our regular language enrollees are in English, Biological Sciences, History, and Philosophy. In each case we felt strongly that an improvement in communication would be an added asset regardless of the student's ultimate goal - most frequently the classroom, the courtroom or a medical field.

I attempted my first Communication Intensive course with a 4<sup>th</sup> semester course in Lyric Poets featuring Horace and Catullus. The astonishing realization was that reworking the classroom to accommodate students in both formal and informal communication for learning resulted in an improved learning curve and a deeper understanding of why the text may be saying what it appears to say. The results for students at every level in this class led me to seek the opportunity to attempt this environment for the last of our introductory sequence and the beginning of a student's total immersion in the real thing - an author's text. After three semesters and much tweaking of the method, I finally feel that this course, centered on Caesar's Gallic Wars, is resulting in that same success.

This presentation will show, first, that to effectively teach this way requires the students to assume responsibility for much of the work of the course. Secondly, it will show that my most effective role is as a mentor to the process. I will show the tasks which must lead to several of the formal spoken and written grades. Many of these grades require a good sense of the historical setting and the potential historical implications of the text which further their retention of that text. Finally, these assignments have helped students develop a "relationship" with the author whose words are one of the primary sources for their personal ideas about him.

Communication Across the Curriculum Through Mythology  
Albert T. Watanabe (Louisiana State University)

This paper explores the impact of oral presentations in a Classical Studies communication-intensive course – my Comparative Mythology class. I shall show how oral presentations are integrated into the other components of the course, i.e. writing and the keeping of a portfolio. Furthermore I shall be showing how peer-evaluation figures into the grading process of the presentations.

The oral presentations for the course have been integrated into the writing and portfolio components. The students are required to make two 10-minute presentations during the semester leading up in each case to a draft of the final paper. After each presentation the student receives feedback from the other students as well as the instructor. This feedback is incorporated into revised versions of the paper. At the end of the semester the students present[s] the final draft of the paper. Again he receives feedback before it is finally given to the instructor. Thus the presentations play an important role in three revisions of the final paper.

Students also keep a portfolio of their research for their presentations (and paper). Portfolio guidelines are set to report on books, articles and images which form parts of the presentation. The portfolio is posted on a wiki so that the instructor and other students can see work-in progress. By setting deadlines for material to be posted on the wiki the instructor can assure that the student makes steady progress in developing presentations and papers.

All presentation are peer-evaluated. The instructor distributes an evaluation form which the students fill out after each presentation. A copy of this evaluation form will be distributed in the panel session. The instructor in turn grades the student evaluators, thus assuring that the evaluators make knowledgeable comments about the presentation.

Oral presentations have enhanced the learning process in my Comparative Mythology class. The students acquire research skills which allow them to go into more depth in their knowledge of the subject.