**TEACHING DOSSIER**

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**1. Teaching goals**

• To have a positive effect on the students' future professional and life practices.

• To inspire students and allow them to develop their interests, skills and understanding for environmental issues and environmental/occupational health.

• To encourage and teach skills which allow students to apply information communication technology in their research and course work.

• To assist in the development of critical thinking skills and well-organized communication.

• To encourage life-long learning skills.

**2. Teaching Philosophy**

I want students to understand the material and embrace the learning process. I design my courses according to the principles of universal design for learning to identify and try to remove barriers from teaching methods and curriculum materials and be flexible to people’s learning needs. I typically provide the important points, key area and objectives in class using PowerPoint. This system enables me to provide clear, systematic lectures notes to ensure the base understanding of the concept, skill or issue is grasped. These notes are available for review on a virtual learning environment, such as WebCT and Angel or Desire2Learn. As well, I often provide case studies, stories, or scenarios, to allow students to meaningfully interact with the material or learning experience. I often include hands-on learning, field trips, group work and adult education methods. I encourage open dialogue and participation in class. In my classroom efforts are made to make all students, regardless of ability or diversity, feel welcome and empowered.

I continue to learn from my students and from the literature about the dynamics of teaching and about my discipline so I can improve my effectiveness. I have taken a number of courses from the University Teaching Services including Intercultural Communication Effectiveness, Communicating Assertively, Interpersonal communication skills and conflict management, Health and Safety, Universal Design Principles for Teaching, Portfolios, Written Feedback, Teaching Dossier and Introduction to Emerging Technologies. I use assessments methods before evaluation methods to ensure learning objectives are met. I try to remain flexible and incorporate what the students bring to the classroom, in assignments and comments, adapting the methods and content to their interest and learning styles. For example, debates work well with some classes, whereas with other classes they reap more from a discussion that does not polarize positions. I try to realize the unlimited possibilities for improvement and achievement in my students and in myself to obtain excellence. Rubrics help me to ensure the key points are evaluated and feedback is meaningful.

I want to be a catalyst for learning. I challenge myself to consider the environment and health holistically to include the natural and the built environment and technological, social and scientific issues. This demands that I teach critical thinking about environmental problems and the ideologies and systems at work that are contrary to promoting healthy social and natural environments. I am aware that from a student’s perspective, an understanding of the environment is gained principally from their interactions in their community, principally through their friends and family. Ozone, climate change and rainforest destruction, consequently, seem not to have a real and clear impact on students’ lives, because its local relevance is difficult to understand (Bachiorri, Mutti and Pioli, 1995). Rather than pristine wilderness, environment should be seen as where they work, live and play—their community, in other words (Di Chiro, 2000, p. 303).

Environmental education, ecosystem health and all subjects become relevant when issues that deeply concern people, such as racism, sexism, poverty, pollution and food security, are discussed. The nature of the issues provokes emotion, interest, controversy, and expressions of concern for social justice, democracy, health and empowerment. Local examples and issues, linked to global issues, transform teaching about theory into relevant issues that require critical analysis. I teach because I feel that education is the best means for peaceful change towards a more healthy society.

I believe that a pro-Indigenous education system is required for our collective struggle for human development, ecological integrity, healthy communities and peace (Enkiwe-Abayao, 2004). In her 2002 book on the integration of knowledge systems, African educator Catherine Odora-Hoppers (2002) explains, “Indigenous Knowledge Systems enable us to move the frontiers of discourse and understanding of the sciences as a whole and to open new moral and cognitive spaces within which constructive dialogue and engagement for sustainable development and collective emancipation can begin” (p. 25). I try to include local knowledge systems into my courses to promote relevance, interest and cultural sensitivity including my food resources class and my . I know that Eurocentrism has denoted special privileging of European norms, values, institutions, and peoples, as well as the active and conscious diffusion of this ideology outward from a centre that is Europe and try to bring other diverse voices to counteract this force. I bring in my classroom diverse speakers, trips to First Nation reserves and northern communities as well as my own research in Bangladesh, Nunavut, Metis and First Nation communities in the prairies and east coast, Trinidad and Costa Rica considering cultures and gender. As I develop educational videos about community and environmental health, as part of my research, I show these in my classes. I feel there is much to learn from Traditional Ecological Knowledge, which differs from the Eurocentric ideology regarding resource development, land ownership, social control and other configurations of European power. Knowledge and values of “ecosystem people” (Parajuli, 1997), which have a reciprocal relationship with their respective ecosystems, is very different from “biosphere people” who draw on resources from afar, and often transform those resources through industrial processes. I try to integrate this thinking in all my courses but it is best exemplified by a course I developed called “Environmental Justice and Ecosystem Health”.

My primary goal is to develop each student’s array of learning skills including problem solving, communication including the use of information communication technologies for resource management, analysis, labs and planning. I invoke each of these skills in a wide range of written work, presentations, and exercises. I provide examples of student’s work in order to demonstrate clearly what is required, which builds trust.

**3. Use of Disciplinary Research**

I incorporate my research and professional experience into my teaching to different degrees, depending on the appropriateness for the course. I encourage students to become directly involved in research projects and I give them opportunities to provide creative input to projects. I research in a broad number of areas with special focus on participatory video, waste, food and environmental health policy and management. This research allows me to keep up with the latest developments in the fields.

**4. Teaching Products**

I have generated a number of course outlines, essay rubrics, debate rubrics and presentation rubrics which can be adapted to new situations. As well, I enjoy developing participatory videos and use short videos to ensure diverse community voices are heard in class and to dramatize scenarios. I also apply virtual learning environments, such as WebCT, to provide easy access to PowerPoint presentations, readings and provide opportunity for chats and student exchanges. I use information communication technologies in creative ways to engage students with the material, such as having students develop wiki’s, websites, videos or blogs regarding subjects for their written work.

**5. Graduate Supervision**

I have or am in the process of supervising 30 graduate students, with 17 already having graduated. I believe that mentoring, advice and guidance can greatly benefit students’ study program. I make myself availability to students and as a result they often meet with me to not only discuss course materials or their thesis project but also to talk about career and personal issues. I try to build up their strengths and have student follow a disciplined approach and rigorous process in their research program that we jointly decided on. I recently developed a learning contract with students to ensure that we share the responsibility of meeting the required steps, their goals and my goals for them during the research process.

During the student’s research period I ask them to engage in scrum management each meeting asking them to take 15 minute to reflect on what they are doing. In critical periods for students, I ask that each day they e-mail me their activities, any epiphanies about their research, as well as any difficulties. Most students end up e-mailing me once a week, with me responding back usually the same day with advice or acknowledgement. However, when a student needs to achieve something this scrum management fosters a very helpful open communication. In these periods the student may e-mail me many times a day to receive feedback to advance their work.

**6. Teaching graduate courses**

Much of my recent teaching is in graduate courses, although I have taught large undergraduate courses at Ryerson University. These graduate classes are usually small to medium sized classes. I teach using a wide array of methods, including adult education techniques, which really challenge students to engage with the material. I provide current journal articles as the basis for discussion. Also, I often provide case studies, stories, or scenarios, rather than supply students with static facts to allow students to engage in a creative thinking process around the issues. Field trips provide opportunities for group work, dialogue and participation. In a number of courses we have visited First Nation reserves. I am sure to use lectures to present the key areas and objectives. I realize critical analysis may require stimulating students to consider situations from perspectives that are different from those they normally adopt. I also encourage students to develop career-long habits of self-motivated learning.

References:

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