INTEGRATING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING INTO YOUR COURSE: TWO OPTIONS

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WELCOME TO OUR NIGHTMARE

- Ken Bain, What the best College Teachers Do?” Harvard U Press 2004
- ASU: Introduction to Astronomy
- First day survey: outdated and inaccurate Aristotelian ideas as to the nature of the universe
- Content of course directly challenged these ideas
- Many students did well on exams and assignments
- Last day survey: ideas as to nature of the universe remain largely unchanged
- Plug-and-chug, but no sustained, substantial, or positive change in the way students thought, felt, or behaved (a definition of learning)
People learn when being challenged to answer questions about which they care.

Not contingent about major, intellectual ability, level of study, nor demographics like race, class, or gender.
OPTION 1: THE BIG QUESTION

THREE STEPS:

1. What big question does this course attempt to answer?
2. Integrate it in your purpose of the course
3. Teach to it: lecture, questions, exercises, labs, assignments, papers
Soc 100 Purpose of the Course, OLD:
“You will learn about the origins of sociology as a discipline and be introduced to major sociological theories and methods of research.”
Soc 100 Purpose of the Course, NEW:
“Part of this endeavor gives us an opportunity to try to answer the big question: are human beings able to stop killing each other? Understanding sociological processes ultimately assists the development of a more just and tolerant society (a “civil democracy”) and world; it decreases the likelihood that one will someday look down the sights of a gun at another human being and pull the trigger.”
WAYS TO UNCOVER THE BIG QUESTION

- Ask yourself the reverse question: Where would humanity be if we knew nothing of what was taught in this course?

- Ask faculty from outside of your area
  + E.g. French class
OPTION 2: THE PROJECT-BASED COURSE

OLD WAY:

- 15 weeks = 15 chapters
- Paste in a few exams and a paper
- **Assumption:** My responsibility to teach ends when the content has come out of my mouth.
- Bonus points if I put it on a power point slide
CONSIDER THE LOGICAL FLAWS

1. How many undergraduate courses did you take? How much do you remember from each one?
2. Which do you remember more: experiences, or lecture?
YOUR BIG QUESTION:

FOUR STEPS:

1. What semester-long experience can I give my students that teaches what they should most remember?
2. Structure the course around the experience.
3. Break it down into manageable pieces.
4. Plug in course content as it relates TO the semester-long project.
EXAMPLE: RESEARCH METHODS

C:\Users\bfriesen\Documents\My Documents\CLASS Methods\methsyl.15s.pdf
UT Sociology graduates score in 92\textsuperscript{nd} percentile on national ETS exam; highest in Methods and Statistics subscale
My facebook post this week:
“Gloating – a little. One of my Research Methods students popped in just to tell me they got paid $10 to take a survey on campus and ended up criticizing the operationalizations, many of which were neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive and didn't include an "Other" category where applicable. More meaningful than their ownership of the class content was the look of excitement and pleasure on the face of the student; the result of a sense of competence and mastery. #lloveymyjob”
A HUMBLE PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING:

A teacher has not taught until the student has learned.

The Big Question and the Project-Based Course are two methods that have helped me fulfil that.