

Notes from the Chair

Michelle D. Deardorff • Jackson State University
michelle.d.deardorff@jsums.edu

The 2006 Teaching and Learning Conference was as effective and energetic as in the previous two years. It was good to meet many of you and begin to place faces to the names on our membership roster. As in the 2005 meeting, the Undergraduate Education Section met informally to discuss the section, its plans, and our future directions. One recurring issue that arose is the need to reevaluate and reconsider the name of our section.

When the UE Section was originally founded, faculty at teaching institutions had no real home or place in APSA. The original membership was primarily (but never exclusively) faculty at four-year colleges who emphasized the importance of undergraduate education. For these individuals, the section was often the only place in APSA where they felt welcome. Since our beginnings, the focus of the section has been on the inclusion of the teaching aspects of our profession into the APSA. The changes in APSA over the last five years (the Teaching and Learning Conference, changes to the APSA website, their Teaching and Learning committee, their support of our new journal—*The Journal of Political Science Education*) have reinvigorated our membership's involvement in the national organization. While our section was initially designed to provide an APSA "home" for faculty at teaching institutions, our membership is currently much broader. A cursory view of our membership roster reveals that approximately 45% of our membership is from B.A. granting institutions and nearly 5% are from community colleges or other types of institutions. However, over half of our members (including this chair and former chairs of the section) are from an M.A. or Ph.D. granting institution. Consequently, our focus is larger than just undergraduate education. Our members are not only teachers, but active scholars and participants in the various substantive sections of the discipline.

While the narrow focus of our section initially ensured that we were involved in all APSA Teaching and Learning activities, now that APSA is emphasizing teaching, our focus is limiting our potential influence on the discipline in two ways. First, there is a concern within APSA that the Teaching and Learning Conference not be seen as only for undergraduate education, but that it also include graduate and other forms of political science education. APSA does not want us too closely affiliated with the conference for fear that our perceived singular focus on undergraduate education be connected to the conference. Second, every year when we work on the Annual APSA Conference, our section must cooperate with a Teaching and Learning chair (who is only appointed to the conference committee). We are not given responsibility for all of the Teaching and Learning panels because our section is misperceived as only being interested in undergraduate education. Despite this misperception, we offer

CONTENTS

Improving Teaching

Fostering Student Learning for Everyone 2
*on Presentation Day: How to Move Beyond
Daydreaming and Friendship*
Alison Rios Millett McCartney

Survey of Political Science Clubs 3
Julie L. Mueller

Pedagogy: The Exploration and Utility of 4
'Probabilities Pondering'
Emmanuel C. Nwagboso

Notables 4

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Getting Started Doing Scholarship of 5
Teaching and Learning (SOTL)
Jeffrey L. Bernstein and John Ishiyama

The Teaching Professor

Research at a Small, Comprehensive 6
Southern University
Greg Domin

Key Debates

Cloaked or Uncloaked: Should Professors 7
Reveal Their Political Ideology to Their Students
Rebecca Tatman Klase and J. Michael Bitzer

Featured Essays

Teaching Law in the Caucasus: Observations 9
of a Visiting Faculty Fellow
Charles Robert Davidson

Teaching American Politics: The Politics of 12
*Incorporating Multicultural Highlights Into
a Traditional Curriculum*
Augustus Jones, Jr. and Michelle G. Briscoe

About Our Contributors 17

short courses on helping graduate students find employment at teaching institutions, we work closely on issues of departmental and classroom assessment of all kinds, and our peer-reviewed journal addresses issues of political science education broadly.

We are at a crossroads; we need to envision how the section can interact with the new face of APSA without losing the engagement of our initial membership—the political scientist who

Fostering Student Learning for Everyone on Presentation Day: How to Move Beyond Daydreaming and Friendship

Alison Rios Millett McCartney • Towson University • amccartney@towson.edu

Many professors look forward to student presentations as much as they relish day-long committee meetings. In both cases, one hopes that something is accomplished somehow, but the process can be boring with the output of time far outweighing what is gained. In particular, we may worry that unless the student presenter has several good friends in the class, no one is paying attention. It becomes wasted time except for the one student who is presenting. While the benefit of honing individual oral presentation skills is important, many wonder what the class as a whole gains. I suggest that the student presentation days can be constructive for all students and increase students' learning outcomes if we use this time properly. I offer a three-step process to achieve this goal: structured evaluation, meaningful feedback, and grading the evaluator.

Each individual student must remain engaged and accountable for learning in the class, even on days when he/she does not make a presentation. The primary tool that I use to make this time productive for everyone is to require students to fill out a sheet of questions on every presentation. The questions require the listener to evaluate every part of the presentation. The sheet begins with basic questions to see if the student is listening, such as requesting a summary of the presentation's main argument. It proceeds to ask deeper questions, including evaluating the quality and relevance of the evidence used to support the argument and judging the clearest and strongest versus the weakest part of argument (and why). The sheet ends with areas for overall comment, such as whether and how the presenter's handout was/was not helpful, where the presenter's style can improve (volume, eye contact, etc.), and questions left unanswered that, if addressed, could increase the listeners' understanding of the subject and argument. The first point of the sheet is to create questions that, when answered, will help students learn not only when they see a good or bad presentation, but why one presentation is more effective than another.

The second point of the sheet is to give presenters feedback from a variety of viewpoints so that they can improve their papers before they are handed in for a grade. There are several reasons why I feel that this format is helpful in advancing student achievement. First, I do not purport to have the monopoly on good ideas of how to improve student papers. Second, I always have students present their research papers shortly before they are due. Their work should be sufficiently advanced at that time, and presentations provide an opportunity to test out their ideas and find weaknesses prior to submitting the main part of their research grade—the final paper—and ensure that papers are not fully done the night before the due date. After I review the comments and issue participation grades, I cut off the very top part of the sheet with the evaluator's name, staple them to my evalu-

ation, and give them back to the presenter. Students know ahead of time that their comments will be seen anonymously by presenters, and I encourage them to write only in blue or black ink on these days to minimize the potential for identification. Since presenters get these packets before their papers are due, they can utilize the comments to improve their papers. Indeed, I tell them that they will be more harshly graded if an evaluator commented on a flaw that still exists in the final paper. Thus, I systematically encourage presenters to take the comments as a learning opportunity. Finally, as every presenter knows, it is difficult to make notes on each commentator's suggestions when standing at the podium. I do allow time for students to make oral comments at the end of the presentation, but having a complete written record to take home and ponder enhances the opportunity that these comments will be constructively utilized.

Just handing out such a sheet is not enough on its own, which is why step three is also important. Students earn a participation grade for each day of class, and the quality of their comments on the sheet is how I grade them on presentation days. So, they need to go beyond cheering along a friend or just being quiet and polite. I remind them that everyone can improve some aspect of his/her presentation and explain that saying that everyone did everything "great" suggests to me that they did not really listen. In addition, regardless of what path they pursue after college, I tell them that they will most likely have to conduct some form of evaluation of others, whether it is their bosses or those that they supervise. They can use this experience to practice giving constructive and honest feedback, a necessary skill to advance in today's world, and I have a "stick" to push them to do it.

I generally allow students to create their own research topics within the parameters of the class subject. First, this method increases the likelihood that students will work on a subject within their interests, hopefully encouraging a desire to learn more. Second, it ensures variety in what issues or geographic regions are presented, thus eliminating the potential boredom of repeatedly hearing the same points. Third, it provides a deeper exploration of a subject we have touched upon in class or expands the scope of material that is brought into the classroom.

Using these three steps—structured evaluation, meaningful feedback, and the "stick" of grading the evaluator—has helped me to engage all students on every presentation day. This method also presents students with chances to advance their knowledge in political science and learn skills that will help them regardless of what career they pursue after college. By employing evaluation sheets in this manner, it is possible to increase active learning during presentations and keep the daydreamers and text-messagers at bay. **PSE**

Survey of Political Science Clubs

Julie L. Mueller • University of New England • jmueller@une.edu

In response to my query of the Undergraduate Education section of APSA regarding Political Science clubs, I received information from eleven people, ranging from schools with very small departments, like my own, to those with very large departments. Obviously, the range of activities varied, with larger departments having more money and resources to put toward such extracurricular activities. However, it appears that the problems associated with these clubs strike some similar themes, regardless of the size of the program.

The types of activities that clubs pursued fell into several general categories. By far, the most popular category involved hosting speakers or faculty discussions of some sort. Many sponsored more formal events, such as small conferences or candidate debates. Some clubs have also traveled to professional conferences together. More informal events include meetings with professors outside of class, sometimes off campus, and meeting with job candidates as student representatives. Other popular club activities related to writing about political science. These efforts included sponsoring writing competitions for undergraduates or high school students, doing support work for journals, writing their own student journals of politics, and sponsoring a current events newsletter. Participating in Model United Nations (UN) was also a popular activity for political science clubs, including acting as volunteers for high school Model UN (often in conjunction with the local World Affairs Council) and attending the collegiate level Model UN in New York. Clubs also hosted a variety of social events, including game nights, film series, West Wing Wednesdays, election-themed events, and socials for their members. Political science clubs also frequently function in a support role for events being hosted by their departments. One of the more unique ideas was for a political science club to leave a lasting legacy for the school through the purchase of books for the school library.

Political science clubs are often allied with other related groups. Rather than a club, per se, some schools have a chapter of *Pi Sigma Alpha* that serves the same purpose. Other schools' clubs function in conjunction with related organizations, such as the College Democrats/Republicans, the pre-law club, or the ACLU. Some clubs are completely student-run, others have more direction from faculty.

One of the greatest drawbacks to a student-run club is its dependence on student initiative and leadership abilities, which wax and wane from year to year. This problem was a common theme,

regardless of the size of the school. However, one school noted the success of student recruitment by creating a *Pi Sigma Alpha* chapter, which students were eager to join. Another frequent complaint was the issue of having to raise money in order to sponsor certain costly events, such as a trip to the Model UN in New York.

The majority of the feedback I received from those involved with their school's political science clubs was positive. Overall, such clubs seem to be beneficial for the students involved. However, student interest seemed to be harder to sustain over the long run for clubs in smaller departments, where faculty are already straining to meet their multiple obligations and do not have the time or energy to organize club events without strong student leadership. **PSE**

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Pedagogy: The Exploration and Utility of “Probabilities Pondering”

Emmanuel C. Nwagboso • Jackson State University • emmanuel.c.nwagboso@jsums.edu

“Probabilities Pondering” is a method of teaching that allows the professor to vigorously probe the students in the classroom through the discussion of assigned materials to ascertain their comprehension, thinking and reasoning abilities. Generally, if applied systematically, Probabilities Pondering stimulates discussion, encourages students to apply their comprehension and reasoning abilities, and improves their writing skills. This approach enables the professor to assess the students’ ability to interpret and apply a key classroom concept. Probabilities Pondering assumes five elements:

I. Raise the Probabilities Question

The professor raises the probability question on the assumption that the students did not read the material in question or that there is a low likelihood of comprehension. While mentioning the concept or sub-topic of the material, the probability questions allow the students to think beyond and above the content of the materials given to them. For example, in a State and Local Government class, the professor may want to determine how well students understand the concept of federalism. The professor would introduce a current example, such as a recent presidential statement regarding new expectations surrounding federal standards in public education. Students would then be asked to articulate the beneficiaries of federalism in these circumstances.

II. Ponder the Question

Allow the students ample time to ponder the answer to the probabilities question. If after the students have considered the problem and there is no correct answer, go to probe. A series of probing questions or additional examples, connecting to previous classroom material (and course readings) may jog the students’ understanding of the concept. For example, students may be asked to refresh their memories regarding federalism and how it has applied in other circumstances.

III. Dialogue

Allow a short debate on the topic or subject; it is important for students to talk amongst themselves when necessary. Dialogue among the students on the topic helps students use their mental powers to enhance their faculty of reasoning on the issues before them. It has been proven that students think faster when they get together and talk to each other on academic issues. By brainstorming potential answers to the question, students may eliminate incorrect answers on their own and push each other to consider additional possibilities.

IV. Ideas/Images

While the classroom debate is going on, the professor introduces more images or examples of the material’s contents for further discussion. The purpose of introducing the new images is to

gradually elicit the answer to the Probabilities Pondering question. In our example, the professor could provide more details as to how the various players in education are affected by these federal mandates. As students begin to understand, their examples could be solicited.

The professor’s demeanor during the discussion of the Probabilities Pondering problems will depend on the outcome of the students’ debate. Did the students ponder or cogitate on the question, and did they resolve or arrive at the answer? If the student did not arrive at the correct answer, the professor pauses and points out any miscommunications and perhaps, restates the Probabilities Pondering question to the students. Most of the time, after restating the probabilities question and in conjunction with the debates, the student will solve the Probabilities Pondering problem.

V. Testing the Probabilities Pondering

The success of the Probabilities Pondering approach can be tested by utilizing a “Patch Method.” The “Patch Method” reintroduces the question in a different manner to test if the students’ understanding of the key concept can be applied to dramatically different examples. This approach enables the professor, if necessary, to reintroduce the topic or rephrase the Pondering question for further deliberation. The “Patch Method” also allows the students to refresh their memories of the topic, enhances their thinking skills and helps them to arrive at the answer to the Probabilities Pondering question introduced in the initial problem. Students can also engage in this same process in writing, in order to test their communication skills in this realm. Probabilities Pondering is a successful means of developing understanding by the students because it encourages them to read, comprehend, reason and improve their communication skills. **PSE**

Notables

• Dr. David Dolowitz, Reader in the School of Politics and Communication Studies, University of Liverpool, is one of four academics who has been singled out by academics at other universities for commendation for his outstanding contributions to teaching. Dr. Dolowitz was invited to a ceremony held at the University of Birmingham. The award was presented by the Centre for Sociology, Anthropology and Politics (C-SAP), one of 22 Subject Centres set up by the Higher Education Academy to foster good practice in teaching and learning in UK universities. The award recognizes his commitment to the development of innovative teaching and learning in social sciences and honors his support for the work being conducted by C-SAP and the Higher Education Academy.

Getting Started Doing Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL)

Jeffrey Bernstein • Eastern Michigan University • jbernstei@emich.edu

John Ishiyama • Truman State University • jishiyam@truman.edu

During the 2006 American Political Science Association Teaching and Learning Conference, we were pleased to do a workshop that introduced colleagues to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) and offered some resources for getting started. This work builds on our experiences as Carnegie Scholars in the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL). Here, we reproduce some material from this workshop for those who were unable to be there.

I. What is the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning?

(Adapted from the website of *MountainRise*, an online Scholarship of Teaching and Learning journal published at Western Carolina University):

In 1990 in *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, Ernest Boyer said the professoriate must "...break out of the tired old teaching versus research debate and define, in more creative ways, what it means to be a scholar." Lee Shulman, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, adds that "viewing teaching as scholarly work is essential. Teachers have to carry out their work in isolation from their colleagues. The result is that those who engage in innovative acts of teaching do not have many opportunities to build upon the work of others... we seek to render teaching public, subject to critical evaluation, and usable by others in the field."

Teaching and teachers benefit from this new awareness that teaching, not only disciplinary study, is a worthy subject for research in constructing a public body of knowledge that is steadily reviewed and developed. As Bender & Gray state, "More than simply a new term for traditional tasks, the scholarship of teaching describes a new concept of academic work. In the scholarly classroom, guided by reflective practitioners, students are encouraged to become speaking subjects, and teaching becomes the object of ceaseless and generative" inquiry. (*The Scholarship of Teaching*)

Pat Hutchings, Carnegie Vice President, and Lee Shulman, Carnegie's President, point out in their article "The Scholarship of Teaching: New Elaborations, New Developments" (*Change*, September/October 1999), that the scholarship of teaching is characterized by "being public, open to critique and evaluation, and in a form that others can build on. . . . It requires a kind of 'going meta,' in which faculty frame and systematically investigate questions related to student learning—the conditions under which it occurs, what it looks like, how to deepen it, and so forth—and do so with an eye not only to improving their own classroom but to advancing practice beyond it." In other words, faculty set out to do the scholarship of teaching and learning not only to improve

the teaching and learning in their own classroom but also to improve teaching and learning beyond their local setting by adding knowledge to—and even beyond—their disciplinary field.

For the two of us, one of the best statements on the scholarship of teaching and learning comes from Randy Bass, 1998 Carnegie Scholar and Associate Provost at Georgetown University. Bass frames his understanding of SOTL work in terms of problems:

One telling measure of how differently teaching is regarded from traditional scholarship or research within the academy is what a difference it makes to have a "problem" in one versus the other. In scholarship and research, having a "problem" is at the heart of the investigative process; it is the compound of the generative questions around which all creative and productive activity revolves. But in one's teaching, a "problem" is something you don't want to have, and if you have one, you probably want to fix it. Asking a colleague about a *problem* in his or her research is an invitation; asking about a *problem* in one's teaching would probably seem like an accusation. Changing the status of the problem in teaching from terminal remediation to ongoing investigation is precisely what the movement for a scholarship of teaching is all about. (From Randy Bass, 1999. "The Scholarship of Teaching: What's the Problem?" *Inventio*, Volume 1, Number 1).

II. What are the "big pieces" I should be reading?

Below, we have produced an annotated starter bibliography for those considering working in this area:

Boyer, Ernest L. 1990. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. Princeton: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

The first book to explicitly discuss a scholarship of teaching. Boyer proposed this category in addition to the more traditional "scholarship of discovery"—this book also talked of the scholarships of application and integration.

Glassick, Charles E., Mary Taylor Huber and Gene I. Maeroff. 1997. *Scholarship Assessed*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Following on Boyer, this book begins the process of exploring how we would evaluate SOTL work. It calls for similar standards for this and other work—clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation, and reflective critique.

Bass, Randy. 1999. "The Scholarship of Teaching: What's the Prob-

See "Getting Started..." continued on page 16

Research at a Small, Comprehensive Southern University

Greg Domin • Mercer University • DOMIN_GP@mercer.edu

I teach political science at Mercer University—a small but comprehensive university in Macon, Georgia. Mercer prides itself on its teaching and small class size. I teach anywhere between 21–27 hours in any given academic year, not including summer school. I also have three small children and a wife constantly vying for my attention, so one would think that research is a secondary concern. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Mercer has a reputation as a very good regional university. However, there are plans to make it more nationally renowned over the next ten years by increasing its endowment to \$1 billion, raising faculty salaries to compete nationally, creating more endowed chair positions, and encouraging more research in all of its colleges, schools, and programs. For a school that prides itself on its teaching, adding more research to an already heavy faculty teaching load seems far-fetched. But is it? It depends on how you define “research.”

Strictly speaking, some faculty members, like myself, have been able to juggle teaching with research in the traditional sense, i.e., writing books, publishing papers in peer-reviewed journals, attending professional conferences, etc. But at Mercer, research is broadly defined to include the development of simulations, taking students to professional conferences to present their research, and creating courses in the curriculum that encourage more student research. In other words, Mercer encourages students to be part of the research experience.

In our department alone, we have added two courses over the last five years that meet the challenge to increase research in the curriculum: one course on research design and another called the senior seminar. It may seem odd to some that adding a research design course to the curriculum is anything new. At Mercer it is. Most faculty teach at least one course outside of their discipline. While Mercer has a myriad of majors, its core focus in the College of Liberal Arts is liberal arts, which includes First Year Seminar, Scientific Inquiry, Great Books, Senior Capstone, etc. So in order to accommodate this “cross-discipline teaching,” most of our majors are 27 semester hours. In other words, most of the courses a student takes are geared towards the liberal arts experience or the Great Book track, which means many of our faculty members are not receptive to expanding major programs for fear of losing faculty members to teach in these other programs.

In political science, however, we have successfully expanded our major to include 33 semester hours, which is outside the norm. We expanded the major with an eye to include the more research-oriented courses we thought were lacking in our curriculum. The new research design course is a lower level course designed to introduce students to the basic principles behind research design and statistics. It will be offered for the first time

next fall. The senior seminar course, which I am teaching this spring, is geared toward harnessing all of a student’s learning in the discipline into a coherent, original research project. For example, my 22 students in the senior seminar are working on developing a research prospectus on a particular question or issue in which they have a great interest. Since many of our students go on to law school or graduate school it gives them an opportunity to see first hand how to research a question thoroughly and properly. And, having such a course that requires original research makes our students more competitive when they apply to these schools. The course culminates with the students presenting their research findings to the class, their peers in the department, and the faculty. I also hope to take those students who will not graduate until December or May 2007 to local regional conferences to present their research.

So it is possible to do research at a teaching institution like Mercer University. It just depends on a few things: how you define research, how committed the administration is to adding research to the curriculum, and how creative and driven the faculty is to include student research within their own classes. In a department like ours, with only five members, a heavy teaching load, and responsibilities to teach across disciplines, the challenge to add research to the curriculum can be accomplished, and a lot of fun! And, our faculty continues to teach at least one cross-disciplinary course each year. So, we have the best of both worlds: a faculty committed to its teaching duties while encouraging student research. What could be better? **PSE**

Call for Papers: *Academic Exchange Quarterly*

Academic Exchange Quarterly, a peer-reviewed print journal devoted to educational research and development, is issuing a call for papers on the topic of Teaching Political Science, for publication in a special section in the Winter 2006 issue. We welcome submissions that span a broad scope of issues in political science education, including teaching techniques, new simulations and active learning exercises, experimental studies, distance learning, pedagogical inquiries, assessment, and synthetic essays. In short, both practical and theoretical pedagogical articles in all subfields of political science are invited for submission. The submission deadline is August 31, 2006. The submission procedures may be viewed at: <http://rapidintellect.com/AEQweb/rufen1.htm> or at: <http://www.rapidintellect.com/AEQweb/5politic.htm>. The Political Science Feature Editor is David L. Weiden, Department of Politics and Government, Illinois State University, dweiden@ilstu.edu.

Cloaked or Uncloaked: Should Professors Reveal Their Political Ideology to Their Students?

Rebecca Tatman Klase • Greensboro College • rklase@triad.rr.com

J. Michael Bitzer • Catawba College • jmbitzer@catawba.edu

Political science professors struggle with the issue of how to approach the disclosure of their own political ideology. Are we obligated to mask our values and opinions to avoid undue influence over students or does the revelation of our thoughts allow for better discourse in the classroom? In this essay, we will discuss our differing approaches and why we have chosen to be “cloaked or uncloaked.”

Uncloaked! You not only should but must reveal your own ideology

—Rebecca Tatman Klase

Every time I see a Jay Leno “reporter on the street” segment where they attempt to zing innocent bystanders with questions such as “where does Congress meet?” I have nightmares about one day seeing a former student who can no longer name a single civil liberty. Imagine the headlines in my institution’s student newspaper: “Former Political Science Major Remembers Absolutely Nothing from American Government Class.”

While there is value in learning the language and structure of government, this is not the central objective of my government classes. As a professor in a small liberal arts institution, my main focus is leading students to understand the role of government in a broader society and to convince them it can be a mechanism for positive change. One of the skills they should develop is the ability to understand public policy topics of current interest from a variety of perspectives, choose a stance on the topic with which they agree, and defend their position with argument and reason rather than dogmatism. An important element of this is the ability to communicate these policy debates—a skill that only comes with practice. However, to accomplish this, students must over time reveal their political ideologies or worldview. Basically, I believe it is unreasonable to expect them to examine and delineate their political ideologies to me if I am not also willing to do so. Thus, early in each semester I conduct a political ideology exercise that culminates with students and the professor identifying their own ideology on the conservative/liberal spectrum. Even if I did not do so, the enterprising students would simply look up my name in the on-line voter registration files for my state and quickly determine my political affiliation, registration status, and voting record.

This approach allows me to use topics of current interest to illustrate class concepts. I model an approach to civil discourse that encourages the expression of different opinions through my willingness to be frank about my stances on issues and also to openly hear other outlooks. Hopefully, my respectful attitude

towards others’ views encourages my students to become open advocates of their own who can also understand opposing viewpoints.

There are, of course, critics to this approach. In recent years we have heard repeated cries about the liberal bias of college faculty who are unduly influencing the current generation of college students. Although our tendency as academics is to describe research findings that demonstrate how young children hold political ideologies that are most strongly influenced by family, the real answer is simply, “I have yet to convert a student to become a card-carrying Democrat. Even if I wished to do so, I simply don’t have that kind of influence over them.”

Over time, I have developed an on-campus, off-campus approach to this issue. On campus, I am open about my political ideology while at the same time taking care with restrictions on partisan activities as appropriate at a non-profit institution of higher education. Hopefully my students understand that although my dream job would be to use a sabbatical to actively participate in a Democratic Congressional campaign (with a capital D); I work to maintain internship opportunities with Congressional offices for both parties so that students can find matches to their own ideologies. However, there is never any question that I am a bleeding-heart liberal who supports every social cause that walks in the door.

Off-campus is another story. I play many roles in the community that require my neutral “political scientist” hat. Rather than participate in Democratic Women, I am actively involved in the League of Women Voters, organizing and moderating voter forums. I try to maintain an aura of political neutrality while serving as a political analyst for a local television station. When speaking to civic groups my topic is usually non-partisan and more focused on political participation and civic discourse. My apparent neutrality is vital to my credibility in these varied roles. I believe this enhances my service to the community as well as opening a wider variety of opportunities for my students to also be involved in community service, internship, and ultimately employment.

Ultimately, my approach to this issue is one that I believe benefits my students. By openly discussing our own perspectives and the role that ideology plays in the political system, politics and government become a reality in their lives. And hopefully if they flub the Jay Leno question, they’ll tell everyone they were a biology major.

In Support of the Devil's Advocate (or, how one can be labeled "the biggest tree-hugging liberal" and "far right-wing conservative" from the same class evaluations) —J. Michael Bitzer

I would echo Rebecca's comments when it comes to presentations outside the hallowed halls of the ivory tower. Having worked with several TV and newspaper media outlets, as well as serving as political observer to civic groups and moderating candidate forums, I attempt to present a balanced and non-partisan approach. Unlike Rebecca, though, I continue this trait on campus as well, for a number of reasons that pertain to my conceptualization of teaching political science.

My teaching philosophy is centered around a liberal arts education: that one must be open to all venues and critical analyze arguments from all sides. This philosophy was instilled at my undergraduate institution, and shortly after graduating, I read Alan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987), in which he noted that a "liberally educated person is one who is able to resist the easy and preferred answers, not because he is obstinate but because he knows others worthy of consideration." This quote has remained with me for the past 15 years, and now when I enter the classroom at a small, liberal arts institution, I seek to force students to explore and understand other perspectives "worthy of consideration."

Another reason that I decide not to reveal my personal partisanship (I'm even registered "unaffiliated," and I have had students check my registration on-line as well) is that I believe once I state a personal partisan view or advocate consistently a political philosophy, I have done two things:

1. allowed students who agree with those ideas to automatically assume I will favor their perspective and their work, while at the same time,
2. alienating students who are opposed to that political philosophy and who subsequently feel that I will grade their perspectives and beliefs more harshly.

From my perspective, what value is it to set up artificial boundaries or inticements for students based on political leanings?

If anything, my students find that I am an EOO professor: an equal opportunity offender. If one of my Republican students presents what I consider to be a wholly ideological argument, I will counter with a Democratic perspective; if a Democratic goes off in my class, they get the Republican view. It forces me into a devil's advocate role and thinking on my feet, but that's half the fun of class for me. I tell my students I don't care what their political opinion or philosophy is, as long as they can substantiate their perspective with facts and acknowledge the opposite viewpoint. While students don't have to necessarily agree with the opposing view, they should realize that their perspective is not the only "correct" vision to see the world within. Our world and issues have far too many shades of gray.

Far too often, our political discourse is based on how loudly can one shout down the opposition. Far too little listening is done. The classroom should be an environment where students have the right to present their views and arguments, as long as they respect the right of others to disagree and challenge them on their views. To have an umpire in the classroom who favors one side over another contradicts my educational philosophy. We have enough predisposed umpires in the world, with most of them on the ACC basketball court (but that's my only personal political perspective I share in the classroom). **PSE**

Call for Nominations: McGraw-Hill Award for Scholarship and Teaching on Civic Engagement in Political Science

McGraw-Hill is proud to announce the first annual Award for Scholarship and Teaching on Civic Engagement in Political Science. The award recognizes political scientists who advance civic engagement through the study of engagement and participation. The award seeks to honor a wide range of unique and new approaches to the scholarship and teaching of civic engagement, but in particular scholars who raise political awareness, involvement, and participation of undergraduate students. Nominations can be made by anyone, although self-nominations will not be accepted. Award winners will be chosen by a committee appointed by the Chair of the Undergraduate Education section of the American Political Science Association on behalf of McGraw-Hill. The award carries a small cash stipend and the winner will be announced at the annual Awards Reception at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting.

2006 Selection Committee:

Quentin Kidd, Christopher Newport University—Chair
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Send nominations together with supporting documentation to:

Quentin Kidd
Department of Government
Christopher Newport University
1 University Place/Ratcliffe Hall 203
Newport News, VA 23606

Nomination deadline is June 15, 2006.

Teaching Law in the Caucasus: Observations of a Visiting Faculty Fellow

Charles Robert Davidson • American University in Cairo • cdavidson@aucegypt.edu

Having decided at some point in my graduate studies to pursue a teaching career in political science outside of the United States, I have long been fascinated by the comparative similarities and differences between undergraduate teaching in the United States and abroad. For the past three years, I have been teaching undergraduates in the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan and am now completing my first year of teaching at the American University in Cairo (AUC), Egypt. These experiences, while greatly disparate in a multitude of ways, have nonetheless afforded me a unique vantage point on the challenges and rewards of a career in international undergraduate education in the developing world. In this brief essay, I would simply like to share some of these observations about my teaching experience in the former Soviet Union, which will necessarily be general and are not intended to suggest in any way that my experiences are in any way typical (or in any way unique, for that matter). At this time when many on both sides of the debate see only superabundant evidence of cultural and civilizational clash and conflict, I have on the whole been quite amazed and duly impressed by the overwhelming commonalities between my students in Azerbaijan and Egypt and those students that I taught and worked with in the United States. While I deeply hope that my students in these countries have in some way—tangible or intangible—benefited from their interactions with me, I am positive that through my interactions with them, I have formulated (and continue to formulate) a far more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of diversity and commonality in university classrooms around the world.

Teaching Law and International Relations in Azerbaijan

Under the auspices of two international fellowship programs (Civic Education Project and the Open Society Institute), I spent two years teaching international law and international relations to undergraduate students in several universities in Baku, Azerbaijan. Having fortunately had some academic exposure to this part of the world in my graduate studies, I was not wholly unprepared for my assignment to Azerbaijan, yet it would be untruthful to deny that the reality of teaching in Baku was nonetheless not a bit shocking. The educational legacies of the former Soviet Union are omnipresent. I had the rather unique opportunity to teach at a state university and also at a highly-regarded English-medium private university; in both settings, distinct vestiges of the Soviet “top-down” model of education were visible, although at the private university, I was granted nearly complete autonomy to structure and conduct my courses as I saw fit. At the state university, it rapidly became apparent that there were rigid hierarchies that imposed certain inflexibility on every aspect of the teaching process. At a nationwide level, the Ministry of Education retains controls over the curricular framework, significantly circumscribing educators’ ability to modify the content or direction of courses. Students are thus deprived of

innovative and relevant course offerings. Courses in the *Theory of the State and Law* remain staples throughout the region. At the university level, no decision—substantive or procedural, however small—could be taken without the blessing of the rector of the faculty of law. It was, however, quite difficult to actually see the rector—something that, despite repeated personal and organizational attempts, I accomplished only once in two years.

The Academic Environment in Azerbaijan

In light of these stark realities, one cannot help but be awed by the resolve, resourcefulness and ambition of many Azeri students. Their desire to learn was nearly palpable; they quickly recognized, it seemed, that their academic training had been in some respects, lacking particularly for those who sought further their education or obtain work experience outside of the former Soviet Union. These students, generally born in the mid-1980s, were very young at the time of the Soviet collapse, and began their education under the independent Azeri government. On both macro- and micro-economic levels, the breakup of the Soviet Union occasioned serious dislocations: between 1990 and 1995, the country’s gross output fell by nearly 58 percent and real wages correspondingly declined by more than 80 percent.¹ As regards the educational sphere, the loss of financial support from Moscow for educational spending, including educational materials and teacher training, for instance, is hard to overstate.

There were significant, undeniable gaps in the knowledge base of these students with regard to international affairs (to a degree far greater than my own experience in the U.S.). Students had often very limited knowledge of many of the signal events of the 20th century. Even somewhat “regional” issues such as the Iranian Revolution were only vaguely familiar to some students. Of course, this lack of knowledge is in part a function of their age (I have personally noted that many American students of the same age cohort know nearly as little about such “historical” events), yet it also speaks to broader social and economic travails that have beset Azerbaijan since the early 1990s. The relative paucity of outside sources of information—particularly in the pre-internet era and before large-scale educational exchanges—left them (and their teachers, it must also be noted) with limited information about the trends and tendencies that had buffeted other parts of the world. The lack of educational materials had serious consequences on pedagogical styles that already focused heavily on the one-way imparting of information to students. Sorely underpaid (teaching salaries in Azerbaijan range from 75 to a few hundred dollars per month, even as living costs continue to soar) and generally lacking exposure to alternative teaching methodologies, teachers tend to emphasize the uncritical acquisition of information, to be faithfully reproduced on examinations.

Without adequate learning aids, educators understandably

emphasized the complete acquisition of the information they provided. This in turn caused many students to excel in terms of capacity to memorize copious amounts of material. It is a decided challenge to students who have learned to memorize limited materials and the lectures of their teachers to be asked to think critically about an issue. Rote memorization as the central teaching tool has generally fallen out of favor in most social sciences in the U.S., and many students are at least in principle taught to write critical and persuasive essays. I faced the reality that in other contexts, the emphasis on self-expression is far less. For many of my students, it was an initial challenge simply to be asked to give an opinion, without recourse to a text or notes. I further recall that many students felt uncomfortable with my insistence that I was uninterested in what the author said, but rather more interested in what they thought about what the author said. It was a most fascinating process for me to see them grow increasingly familiar and comfortable with a system that rewarded them for their own thought and analysis. Like in any educational setting, the students' willingness to express themselves only truly manifested itself when a sufficiently non-threatening, nurturing classroom environment had been established. I set about establishing that by loosening the strict hierarchical relationship between professor and students: I allowed students to call me by my first name, I shared with them a detailed account of my academic and professional background, and I gave every student equal class time—the ones with the weakest English skills as well as the fluent and glib.

Very interesting was the reaction of some local colleagues who felt that I had ceded too much "control" to the students, which would ultimately cause the students not to respect me. I was proudly told by a colleague that her classes consisted of her sitting at a desk reading out exercises to the students. Other less formal practices would result in the students' loss of respect towards her, she argued. It was very commonly believed that students needed to be controlled and lectured to. Implicit in the prevailing pedagogical models was an abiding belief that students, by virtue of their status as students, had little to contribute to the classroom and were there to hear the views of the professor. I, however, found that involving the students in structured debates and role play exercises was actually when the students were most fully engaged with the subject, and often lost themselves in the roles of advocates, lawyers, or judges. Paradoxically, I often found that I needed to be less vigilant about issues of classroom conduct precisely when we engaged in such interactive endeavors. I like to think that what might have been seen by some as chaos was merely the creative energy of the students at work.

Teaching critical thought requires that the students compare and evaluate various sources of information and competing viewpoints and perspectives. This endeavor, difficult in the best of circumstances, is rendered even more so where there is limited access to materials. There is a dearth of contemporary scholarly books in Azerbaijan, whether in Russian, Azeri, English, or other languages. As part of my salary, I was given a fixed amount for

books (which had to be donated to the university on completion of the contract), teaching materials, and photocopies. In this way, I was able to provide students with articles from various journals and chapters from key scholarly works. To supplement these resources, students naturally make as extensive use as possible of internet sources, leading many to borrow heavily from sources without adequate evaluation of their quality. Not surprisingly, it was extremely common for students to copy whole pages from other sources without attribution. I never fully appreciated the difficulties of trying to teach students why it is important to credit sources, much less any procedure for doing so. While plagiarism is certainly a problem in educational institutions in America and elsewhere, the lack of alternative resources only exacerbates the problem. Never having been taught otherwise, students naturally considered this a legitimate means of undertaking research. At the same time, I found many of my students in Baku to be intellectually imaginative in ways that an American student, with comparatively vast library resources, need not necessarily be. Lacking materials to draw upon, my students routinely surprised me with novel and imaginative arguments that they themselves had crafted—and while these arguments may have in fact simply restated themes easily found in any adequate American library, the fact that they were arrived at independently was all the more impressive.

I introduced my students to "fact pattern" examinations, very common in American law schools, in which I would create a hypothetical situation in which students would have to identify the legal principles involved and apply them to the facts at hand. My students immediately expressed their consternation that the examinations would not test theoretical aspects of international law. Examinations in Azerbaijan generally consist of several set questions that require students to display the breadth of their knowledge (often in the exact terms imparted by the professor). In recent years, there has been a move away from the historical practice of administering one oral examination at the semester's end (not without a significant amount of resentment among some professors). Professors routinely provide students with a larger list of questions from which the examination questions will be drawn. My students expressed their consternation that without a list of questions they would not "know what was on the examination." When I explained that if they had attended class, listened to and participated in class discussion and ultimately digested the material, they would know exactly what was on the examination, they were initially skeptical. Yet, after one examination (and in some cases after two) most students understood the type of analysis I was seeking. I have never had so many students say that they enjoyed an examination as in Baku. It seems that asking them and requiring them to think analytically and independently was a challenge to which they happily, and generally quite successfully, rose.

The Challenges of Classroom Management

Classroom management poses a separate set of challenges, for I was called upon to address behavior that was unfamiliar to me

from American and European classrooms. For instance, I was not fully prepared to have to act as the disciplinarian, and certainly not in upper-level international law courses. Many professors, local and foreign, complained of the problem of inappropriate classroom behavior. Students would routinely come late to class and proceed to greet their classmates, even as class was being held. One American professor took to locking the classroom door ten minutes into every class to prevent the disruption. It was very common (at least until I made it absolutely clear that I would not tolerate it) for students to carry on parallel conversations. There was initially no sense of speaking in turn; the more vocal student would typically attempt to drown out other competitors for attention. Such behavior proved problematic, particularly as I noted that it often ran along gender lines, with certain male students insistently talking over and interrupting the females. More challenging to resolve was the issue of “collaboration” on examinations and quizzes. Students were unequivocally informed that no talking would be allowed during examinations; infractions would result in an automatic failing grade for that assignment. This raised a peculiar problem as students would occasionally need a translation or explanation of a word in Azeri. I would thus allow a designated student to serve as a translator, and give him or her the right to answer questions. At the same time, I would constantly have to be vigilant for students conferring. Having caught two students whispering during an examination, I asked one of them why he did so, having been previously informed of the consequences. He explained to me that his friend asked him for help and he could not in good conscience not help a friend. I heard this from many students—some of whom could not understand my concern with their mutual assistance policy on examinations. To resolve this problem, I had to take class time to explain why I did not want students to work together on examinations, and why it was important that each student work individually. I felt that it was important to show that I understood their concern for helping one another but that it was essential to be able to master the material independently. Like with the issue of plagiarism, I attempted (with admittedly checkered success) to explain the rationale behind the prohibitions I was imposing. My experience in Azerbaijan has taught me that contextualizing a rule for students often obviates perceptions of arbitrariness, capriciousness, and professorial “power trips.”

The academic environment in Baku was also a crucible of intercultural interaction, and it must be said, not always a comfortable one. As an African-American male, I was an enormous novelty and as a colleague put it, a “learning experience in my own right” for my students, most of whom had limited contact with Americans and foreigners generally and even less so with people of color. One of the greatest challenges that I faced at the public university was a rather personal one: walking up nine floors to my classroom as classes were changing gave the more immature students a weekly opportunity to yell out “Negri! Negri!” at my passing. I occasionally got more colorful taunts, the most memorable of which being “*chorny Frankenstein*” (“Black Frankenstein”). Once in the class, I had no such problems, lead-

ing to the phenomenon that I dreaded actually getting to work but was delighted once there. At the private university, students had had a considerably higher level of exposure to foreigners as there was a thriving program of bringing European and American professors in coordination with such programs as CEP [Civic Education Project] and AFP [Academic Fellowship Program], which annually sent Visiting Faculty Fellows to work in various university departments.

Students at the private universities tended to have, in my opinion, an overwhelmingly — and perhaps unrealistically so — positive view of America and Americans. Oddly enough, I found myself forced to challenge their perspective that tended to glorify America to the complete detriment of their own country. Students had little idea of the problems and challenges that confront contemporary American society—yet it stood (and rightfully so in some regards) in stark contradistinction to their own political and social realities. Having said that, there was an enormous amount of national pride and it was here that one understood that their admiration for the United States and Europe notwithstanding, these students were intensely proud of and knowledgeable about their own cultural heritage.

Students at the public universities, where enrollments could reach up to 20,000 or more, typically had far less exposure to exchange programs and visiting professors. It is an unfortunate reality that, though these students arguably needed the exchange programs more than their private university counterparts, many programs found the bureaucracy and institutional inertia off-putting and devoted their efforts to the more streamlined and innovative new universities. This is all the more concerning because many of the country’s brightest and most talented students can be found in the less expensive (and still rather prestigious state universities). Despite enjoying reputations for high quality, “American-style” education, the private universities, at least in the discipline of law, still do not have the cachet of the state university, which usually draws the highest performers on the nationwide college entrance exams. Some organizations are reluctant to invest in the state universities because of allegations of rampant and pervasive corruption. Students in my public university classes were extraordinarily keen to discuss the legal aspects of corruption because they understood this as being a part of their day-to-day university experience. Students complained of professors who demanded money for a passing grade; professors complained of administrators demanding that certain students be given a certain grade, irrespective of their performance, while all complained of the problem of students who seek out professors willing to take bribes. The issue of corruption has come to the fore of educational reform, including legal education reforms, as places in law programs become increasingly sought after. During my tenure in Baku, articles emerged in the independent press stating that bribes for admission to the country’s premier law school could amount to an astonishing US\$30,

Teaching American Politics: The Politics of Incorporating Multicultural Highlights Into a Traditional Curriculum

Gus Jones, Jr. • Miami University • jonesaj@muohio.edu

Michelle G. Briscoe • Miami University

Census reports reveal that the U.S. is increasingly becoming a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and a multi-racial society. Aware of these demographic trends, colleges and universities are scrambling to formulate and implement curricula that will better prepare their students to compete and succeed in this ever-changing heterogeneous society. Unfortunately, few colleges and universities provide explicit directions on how to construct and implement a multi-cultural American government course. This essay attempts to address this vacuum.

Our Starting Point

Our involvement in composing and activating our *American Politics and Diversity* course can be traced to multiple considerations. The University's adoption of a comprehensive diversity plan in 1998 spurred our involvement. President James Garland asserted that this plan was put in place to address hateful words and deeds in the University. A review of the University's student newspaper, *The Miami Student*, suggests that many factors motivated the University, including (1) telephone calls received by first-year students threatening their lives; (2) the brutal beating of a minority student by white teenagers from surrounding communities; (3) the Kodak Corporation's warning to University officials that it would no longer recruit Miami students if students were not offered a multi-cultural education; (4) requests from former graduates urging university officials to diversify so that Miami students come to the work place with experiences that reflect our heterogeneous society; (5) minority students' protests, sit-ins, and recommendations in 1997 that the University adopt and foster a hospitable milieu for students of color; (6) the successful piloting of the College of Arts and Sciences diversity workshop for first-year students; (7) the posting of hateful graffiti in the Center for Black Culture; and (8) a survey by *Princeton Review* rating Miami University last out of 311 in terms of friendly race/class interactions. Less than a year later the University responded with a plan directed at improving the climate, curriculum, and recruitment of students of color. The new American Cultures requirement flows from that particular curriculum. Our *American Politics and Diversity* course is in response to this new requirement.

Aside from professional reasons, we also had a personal rationale for creating our new course. As two African-American political science professors teaching at a predominately white mid-western university, we welcomed the opportunity to develop this particular course because after collectively teaching American politics for twenty years, we were frustrated. With few exceptions, the American government texts we reviewed did not spell out how different racial, cultural, and ethnic groups had constructed, challenged, and changed the political system. Specifically, they

did not present a comprehensive picture of the historical and political experiences of African Americans, Latinos/Latinas, Native Americans, and white ethnics in the political system. Given this, we enthusiastically embraced the chance to develop a more complete and comprehensive picture of how varied groups have participated in the political system.

No Maps

We recognized that there is no book or map describing how to create and implement an American politics and diversity course. We began constructing our course considering the works of minority scholars. We did so fully aware that while multiculturalism is a fairly new concept, African American scholars for centuries have spotlighted how African Americans have participated in and changed the American political system. Furthermore, we contacted minority scholars at Stanford University, Duke University, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln who had written books or had experiences organizing and teaching politics and diversity. They gave us good advice. For example, the Barker, Jones, and Tate text documents how African Americans were affected by, challenged, and changed the American political system. In so doing, their work serves as a guide for organizing and teaching how other groups are influenced by the features of the political system (federalism, bicameralism, separation of powers, etc.) and political institutions. Additionally, we looked over various articles, books, course outlines, videos, and web sites that seem to relate to politics and diversity, and that we thought might be useful in forming our course.

In assembling our course outline, we were guided by two points gleaned from our attendance at the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity. This conference was designed to help persons interested in developing, implementing, and evaluating multicultural courses. The first point was to communicate the message that diversity does not pertain solely to African Americans; rather, it relates to multiple groups. The second point we took away from the conference was that the creators of multicultural courses must exhibit how their course conforms to or promotes university goals. There are four components of Miami University's Liberal Education Foundation courses: critical thinking, understanding context, engaging learners and reflecting and acting. Our course outline specifies how we intend to satisfy these components.

Having laid out how the objectives of our course are congruent with the aims of the University, we then determined how it would differ from the traditional American Political Systems course commonly known as POL 141. We maintain that our course, *American Politics and Diversity* (POL 142) differs in

two ways. First, our course has a broader focus. Specifically, the traditional course examines how African Americans and women have fared in the American policy process for the period from 1950 to 1990. While informative, this approach offers an incomplete picture of America; our new course takes a more expansive view. It highlights from colonial era to the present day how African Americans, women—and other racial, ethnic, and cultural groups—have been influenced by, challenged, and changed America. By adopting this longitudinal view and including a variety of groups, this course offers a richer and more inclusive version of American politics which hopefully will broaden students' knowledge of American government. Additionally, the traditional American government course, by and large, adopts an elitist or top-down approach to the study of American politics. That is, it concentrates on how major policymakers have influenced different groups. In stark contrast, our new course examines not only how government institutions have influenced different groups, but we also weigh how these particular groups have challenged, constructed, and changed these particular institutions. Various groups encountered a system that may or may not have been designed to support and advance their rights and objectives. This approach enables us to assess how much influence the people are able to exercise over the decision makers elected to act on their behalf. We demonstrate that “yes,” some organized groups can be important as pluralist theories suggest. However, this comprehensive examination shows that other groups have been less successful in achieving their goals even though they have followed an established set of rules. In so doing, we examine a broader range of conflicts and interactions and explore the tactics used by groups to gain notice and find remedies in the American political system. Distinctly, this course offers a closer approximation to the world we live in.

One of the most difficult decisions was choosing what text to use for the course. We agreed that we would need to find an additional text to complement our treatment of diverse groups, history, and politics. After much soul-searching, we selected Feagin and Feagin's *Racial and Ethnic Relations* text because it offered the most comprehensive analysis of group participation. We singled out this work for three reasons. First, their text covered eleven different racial and ethnic groups. Second, they stress that while the groups were different in many ways, they had many things in common. For example, the authors note that many groups have been stereotyped. Finally, we chose Feagin and Feagin because they talk about politics and group participation in the policy process. Specifically, they point out how varied racial, ethnic, and cultural groups have been influenced by and have sought to influence major governmental institutions. This text did have a minor shortcoming. It painted a complete picture of some groups' participation in the political process, but an incomplete portrait of others. The result was we were able to show the historical and contemporary links among some groups, but not others.

Having decided on the text we would use, we structured the course to encourage students to play an active role. The students' roles and responsibilities are spelled out in the course outline as follows:

Each student will be assigned to a team that will be given the task of considering the experience, status, and prospects for one of the groups covered in this class. The team will be responsible for preparing a presentation evaluating that groups record in the political system and outlining strategies for what members of the group can do to advance their political goals. The presentation will include an agenda for action by that group that is informed by what you have learned of the workings of the American political system and the strategies and tactics for influence in the system, and it should demonstrate awareness of disagreements regarding strategy and tactics by members or component organizations within the group under consideration.

To offer the students guidance in focusing their linkage of individual group projects to the American political system, we asked them to consider the following questions:

- What was the nature of the problem(s) that a particular group confronted?
- How did the groups use the political system to call attention to and resolve this problem? Specifically, did group leaders use lobbying, legislation, rule-making, litigation, propaganda, peaceful and/or extra-legal means to resolve problems?
- Did the particular group follow and/or modify the tactics used by other groups in resolving problems or in getting its issues on the national agenda?
- Did group leaders follow and/or modify the tactics used by other groups in pushing for their policy preferences?
- How have these groups contributed to the American political system?

Our success in developing and implementing our course can be ascribed to multiple factors, but the primary one is commitment from the top. Having the President of the university, the Provost, the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Dean of the College of Arts and Science, and the Chair of the Political Science Department pushing for the creation of more multi-cultural courses was pivotal. Support from these top administrators made it difficult for would-be critics to directly attack our course, made it harder for them to charge that our agenda was purely personal, and may have encouraged others to back it in order to be viewed as team players or as good university citizens.

While we secured approval for our course from the Department of Political Science, the College of Arts and Science, and the University Liberal Education Council, we believe it is important to emphasize the road we traveled was not always smooth. As a matter of fact, we encountered bureaucratic bumps and potholes that threatened to derail our efforts. Consider what

occurred when we first attempted to get members of a departmental subcommittee to back our proposed American politics course. Members of that committee raised some very legitimate questions, and they also posed questions and made statements that were troubling. Some members of the department wondered out loud whether the new American Politics and Diversity course was truly a social science course, and also asked if it was intellectually rigorous. We contended that social science refers to the study of human behavior. Specifically, we called attention to the fact that the new course concentrates on how different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups had challenged and changed the American political system. As for the intimation that our class was not intellectually rich and rigorous, we laid emphasis on our course outline. It specifies that the new course required two textbooks and extensive reading. Acquiring the approval for our course took time, energy, and patience.

Mistakes, Mistakes, Mistakes:

Some Things we Should Not Have Done

In piloting our new course, we made several mistakes. Sometimes our enthusiasm about developing and piloting the new course outweighed our information and energy. For example, our course set out to examine how thirteen racial, ethnic, and cultural groups have fared in the political system. This was overly ambitious. The result is, while we covered these varied groups to transmit the message that diversity encompasses more than women and African Americans, our coverage was too broad and shallow. In other words, our analysis had breadth but little depth. Another misstep was beginning our course without a concrete strategy for dealing with students' careless and insensitive remarks. We confronted situations where students make insensitive remarks about Latinos, gays in the military, and about the Islamic faith. When these remarks were made, we were sometimes caught off guard and gave inadequate responses. We expressed our displeasure because we did not take advantage of what should have been teachable moments. We could have taught lessons about critical thinking, tolerance, and the need to know about groups other than one's own.

Further, we made an error not surveying student attitudes at both the beginning and end of the pilot course. We surveyed student beliefs and knowledge about diversity at the beginning of the course but we did not do so at the end. Our failure to follow up our surveys meant we will be left to speculate whether students' views about diversity remained the same or changed; we can only guess whether they actually gained anything from the course. Worse, we do not have data to present to administrators that could demonstrate that students found the course valuable. Such information could prove highly persuasive in getting colleagues and administrators to back the creation of more multicultural courses.

Our failure to contact scholars on campus who had previous experience in teaching a diversity course was another mistake we made in building our American politics course. We could have

profited from on-campus scholars who have taught diversity courses in other disciplines, including education, history, Black studies, and Jewish studies. Finally, contacting relevant faculty on campus could have informed us what to do and what to avoid in setting up and implementing a new course.

Recommendations

Creators of an *American Politics and Diversity* course should first address the popular misconceptions that any course with the word "diversity" in its title deals exclusively with one group—African Americans. To counter this misconception, the instructors of the course must accentuate in conversations with administrators, faculty and students (and in their course outline) that this class concentrates on a variety of groups. Designers of the course should also forward the message that their course is for majority and minority students. They can transmit this message by stressing that their course covers how varied social, ethnic, and cultural groups have fared in the political system. They might also cite census data that shows that the U.S. is increasingly becoming a more heterogeneous society. Tying the courses aims to University objectives will allow developers to claim that in teaching this course, they are satisfying University requirements.

It is also important that developers and implementers of the diversity course have the resources (staff, money, and skills) for doing so. Monies are needed to secure supplied for the course such as books and videos. Funds are also needed to attract speakers who could address topics taken up in the course and respond directly to students questions. Persons teaching American Politics and Diversity courses should be willing and able to teach the course. That is, they should be committed to teaching the class and have skills for doing so. To acquire the skills, they need training. They need to be familiar with the histories, backgrounds, and experiences of different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. They need instruction on how to facilitate constructive classroom conversations about such hot topics as affirmative action, sexual harassment, gays in the military and Boy Scouts, and the rounding up of Arab-Americans after attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. They also need tutoring on how to deal effectively with students' careless, insensitive or intolerant remarks about race, gender, or ethnicity. If possible, faculty should attend the Annual Race and Ethnicity Conference, sponsored annually by Oklahoma State University.

Persons contemplating teaching a political science diversity course should also be cognizant of the political environment in which they operate. Being aware of this environment enables course developers to size up how far, fast, or hard they should push for the adoption of a new multi-cultural course. There are always indications whether the political milieu is propitious for developing and implementing a multi-cultural course. For instance, the political environment is favorable if (1) state officials (e.g. governor or state legislators) have not abandoned the use of race and gender in college admission decisions; (2) the president of the university, the provost, the dean of the college, and

the chair of the department rhetoric and record indicate strong support for a multi-cultural curriculum; (3) university officials have adopted an overall university plan to teach multi-cultural courses; (4) there is a staff person in place with sufficient money and authority to ensure that the multi-cultural plan is carried out creatively, energetically, and effectively; (5) colleagues in various departments are teaching diversity courses in Black Studies, Women's Studies, and Native American Studies; (6) funding and training monies are available for staff who wish to be trained in teaching diversity classes.

Plainly, if these conditions do not exist than the political environment may not be conducive for formulating and implementing a new multi-cultural course. In other words, what should professors do when major officials—president, provost, dean, and chair—are not ardent backers of diversity? There are a number of steps they can take. They can make a cogent case for a multi-cultural political science course by (1) citing data showing fifty or more colleges and universities have devised and activated multi-cultural political science courses; (2) identifying and forming alliances with persons on campus who have constructed, carried out, and evaluated multi-cultural courses; (3) attending NCORE, a conference that offers constructive advice on successfully building and selling multi-cultural courses; and (4) contacting corporate leaders to gain their support in persuading state politicians and university officials to back the adoption and implementation of diversity-focused courses. Moreover, organizers of a new multicultural course can seek to influence major policymakers to back multi-cultural efforts by stressing the benefit of diversity. Indeed, they can cite the relevant findings below:

- A strong plurality of the American people believe that diversity has had a positive overall effect on them personally and their families.
- 88% of US citizens believe it is important to have students of different races, cultures and backgrounds in higher education.
- Integrating diversity materials into the curriculum is likely to improve retention rates for underrepresented groups as well as to enhance satisfaction [with campus life], academic success, and cognitive development for all students.

- The American Association of Colleges and Universities found that education for participation in the United States and democratic pluralities is preparation for citizenship and leadership. It deserves its own time and space in the curricula.

Our experiences in teaching our course have reinforced the view that in order to understand American politics, it is important to understand the Constitution. And in order to understand the Constitution, we need to know something about American politics. One of the queries we debated repeatedly in organizing teaching and evaluating the course was, did we do justice to both traditional and non-traditional subjects in our American politics course? We believe we did. In fact, we contend that our course complements the study of the Constitution. In sum, there are clear linkages to American politics, diversity, and the Constitution. **PSE**

Call for Reviews: *Journal of Political Science Education*

The *Journal of Political Science Education* is seeking authors interested in reviewing classroom-oriented texts, including main textbooks and supplements. We are interested in reviews from across the sub-fields. Authors may review texts they currently use, but we are also interested in critical and comparative reviews.

The *Journal of Political Science Education* is published three times a year and publishes the highest quality scholarship on teaching and pedagogical issues in political science.

Please send inquiries about reviews to the Book Review Editor:

Quentin Kidd
Department of Government
Christopher Newport University
1 University Place/Ratcliffe Hall 204
Newport News, VA 23606

Call for Submissions: *The Political Science Educator*

In preparation for our next APSA business meeting, a large portion of the next newsletter will be dedicated to an exchange on the future of the section. If you have an opinion on this issue please email the editor (michelle.d.deardorff@jsums.edu) your comments and thoughts. Should we keep our name "Undergraduate Education," recognizing that no other part of APSA represents this constituency or emphasis? Should we rename the section to something a bit more broad and inclusive so we can have more disciplinary influence? Is there a compromise that will meet both objectives? Please send your submissions by July 15th.

“Notes from the Chair” continued from page 1

primarily teaches undergraduates. We have been “discussing the need to discuss this” for almost two years. It is time to talk.

I ask the membership to think about this important decision and email me your thoughts. Should we keep our name “Undergraduate Education,” recognizing that no other part of APSA represents this constituency or emphasis? Should we rename the section to something a bit more broad and inclusive so we can have more disciplinary influence? The pre-conference edition of this newsletter (August 2006) will present all of your ideas and suggestions with the purpose of assessing the current views of the membership. I look forward to hearing from you in the months ahead. **PSE**

“Teaching Law in the Caucasus” continued from page 11

000. While I was fortunate to have never been approached by students or administrators, other Visiting Fellows had harrowing experiences of being pressured into giving a certain grade to a particular student. My experience was limited to being told by one administrator that I could only enter final grades in the university records in pencil.

Conclusions

Teaching in Azerbaijan was an enormous challenge—the lack of resources, the often poor infrastructure, the prior training of the students—yet it was an experience that has no doubt made me a far better and more compassionate educator. I imagine that many of the challenges that I faced in Azerbaijan exist to some perhaps lesser degree in some institutions in the United States. I am certain that they reflect the realities in many universities systems throughout the developing world. Yet, in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, and now Egypt, I have had the unique pleasure of meeting students who are motivated not only to improve themselves despite the difficult circumstances that attend their education but who are committed to improving the broader socioeconomic conditions of their countries. Some of my very best students have gone onto academic programs in the U.S. and Europe and have returned to Azerbaijan and are now themselves university professors, training a new group of students and faculty. There is good cause to be optimistic about such small but important initiatives. The future directions of higher education in Azerbaijan and the developing world will, I believe, depend to no small extent on the initiative of local reformers, and far less on well-meaning but nonetheless limited initiatives from abroad. **PSE**

Footnotes

¹ United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Azerbaijan Human Development Report* (2000): 14.

“Getting Started...” continued from page 5

lem? *Inventio*, Volume 1, Number 1. <http://www.doit.gmu.edu/archives/feb98/andybass.htm>

Bass’ formulation of the role of a “problem” in both traditional research and teaching is a very succinct formulation of what motivates many of us pursuing SOTL work.

Huber, Mary Taylor and Pat Hutchings. 2005. *The Advancement of Learning: Building the Teaching Commons*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

A fine new book by two scholars at the Carnegie Foundation, this book discusses the progress of the SOTL movement and suggests an action agenda for growing the movement on campuses.

Shulman, Lee S. 1993. “Teaching as Community Property: Putting an End to Pedagogical Solitude.” *Change* 25: 6-7.

Lee Shulman, President of the Carnegie Foundation, has written a great deal in this area. This piece is a personal favorite, suggesting a model of the university where teaching is given a place of prominence.

III. Anything else I should know?

One thing we have both learned, through our Carnegie experience and at our home institutions, is that the best allies for this work may come from colleagues outside our disciplines. Some disciplines, like psychology and sociology, have a much longer tradition of engaging in SOTL. Someone starting a program in Asian Studies, for example, would not look solely within political science departments for allies, but would instead seek out others with an interest in Asia—perhaps historians, literature folks, and the like. Political scientists thinking about teaching issues should be open to alliances outside the discipline.

We would also urge people considering doing this work to aim for methodological pluralism. The methods we use in our research may be useful, but documenting learning may take other forms—close reading of writing assignments, videotaping and evaluating student performance, etc.—that are less familiar to us. Remember, though, that different problems need different methods. Think broadly!

Doing SOTL elevates us as teachers and as professionals and dovetails nicely with the increasingly popular “teacher scholar” model. By applying the techniques we use in our own substantive work to better understand how our students learn, we can improve our teaching and ultimately better serve our students. Slowly but surely, political science as a discipline is becoming more and more open to such efforts to systematically understand the learning process. A window of opportunity has opened, and we urge our colleagues to look at the references cited above and consider involving themselves in this growing area of political science. **PSE**

Jeffrey Bernstein is Associate Professor of Political Science at Eastern Michigan University. His primary research and teaching interests include political learning and civic education, public opinion, and research methodology. Professor Bernstein is a 2005-06 Carnegie Scholar in the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. His Carnegie project, entitled "Cultivating Civic Competence: Using Simulations to Enhance Learning in an Introductory Government Class," explores how pedagogical innovations can be used to teach and inspire students to gain the skills that enhance their role as democratic citizens.

As an assistant professor of political science at Catawba College, **J. Michael Bitzer** teaches American politics, public administration, and law classes. He holds an A.B. in English from Erskine College, a M.A. in history from Clemson University, and a Ph.D. from The University of Georgia. His current research focus is on urban versus suburban voting behavior in North Carolina, and has conducted research in federal judicial policymaking in administrative law and legislative delegation to bureaucratic agencies in state government. In 2002 he was one of five winners of UGA's Excellence in Teaching Award.

Michelle G. Briscoe earned her Ph.D. from Northern Arizona University in 1997. She was previously an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Miami University where she taught at the Hamilton Campus. Her teaching and research is predominately in the fields of American Politics, Public Policy, and Comparative Politics. In 2002-2003 she was a member of the Alumni Teaching Scholars Community for Early-Career Faculty at the University's Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching.

Charles Robert Davidson is an Assistant Professor of International Law at the American University in Cairo, Egypt. He holds a J.D. from George Washington University Law School, a Masters in Law and Diplomacy (M.A.L.D.) and a Ph.D. in International Relations, both from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He has worked in various educational institutions in the U.S., the Middle East, and the former Soviet Union. Most recently, he taught law and international relations at private and state universities in the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan.

Gregory Domin is an associate professor of political science at Mercer University. He received his B.A. in political science from Drew University, his M.A. in political science from East Stroudsburg University, and his Ph.D. in political science from Northern Arizona University. Dr. Domin's expertise is in U.S. foreign and national security, the presidency, and campaigns and elections.

John Ishiyama is a Professor of Political Science and Director of the Ronald E. McNair program at Truman State University in Kirksville Missouri. He has published extensively, particularly in comparative politics, Post-Communist Eastern European and Russian Politics, and more recently in African politics. He is author or editor of three books and has published over 80 journal articles and book chapters. He was selected as the Carnegie Foundation's

Missouri Professor of the Year for 2004 and a National Carnegie Scholar in 2003. He is also recipient of the 2003 Missouri Governor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. He is currently Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Political Science Education, the journal of the Undergraduate Education Section of the American Political Science Association.

Gus Jones, Jr. received his Ph.D. from Washington University (St. Louis) in 1980. He is currently a Professor of Political Science at Miami University, where he teaches Constitutional Law, Civil Liberties, and American Politics. He is the author of two books: Law, Bureaucracy and Politics: The Implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (University Press, 1982) and Affirmative Talk, Affirmative Action: A Comparative Study of the Politics of Affirmative Action (Praeger Publisher, 1991). Jones was selected as an Effective Educator by Miami University Alumni Association in 1999 and received the Distinguished Educator Award in 2002 by the College of Arts and Science. In 2004, the Association of Student Government named him a Distinguished Teacher.

Rebecca Tatman Klase is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Legal Administration at Greensboro College in North Carolina. Dr. Klase received her Bachelors of Music from Wesleyan College and her M.A. and Ph.D. from West Virginia University. She teaches courses in American politics, public policy, and criminal justice. She is also active in various civic education projects, primarily as a board member of the League of Women Voters Piedmont Triad.

Dr. Alison Rios Millett McCartney is Director of International Studies and Assistant Professor of Political Science at Towson University in Baltimore, Maryland. She teaches foreign policy, European politics, and international negotiation. She has just published an article on teaching a class that combines civic engagement and international relations and is nearing completion of a manuscript on contemporary German-Polish relations.

Julie Mueller is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of New England. Her current research focuses on the International Monetary Fund and examining how and why changes have taken place within this organization. Previous research includes examining the impact of women in development programs in Southern Africa. She teaches classes at the University of New England on international relations, international organization, globalization, comparative politics, and U.S. foreign policy.

Emmanuel C. Nwagboso is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Jackson State University in Mississippi; he earned his Ph.D. from Clark-Atlanta University. He teaches American Government, State and Local Politics, and African Political Systems at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Most recently, his research has focused on international issues of global peace and security and on local questions of housing dilapidation, abandonment and crime in urban areas. **PSE**