The Political Science Educator

The Newsletter of APSA's Political Science Education Section

Winter/Spring 2012
Volume 16
Issue 1

Winter 2012 Newsletter

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1) Message From the Section Chair

In my first few months as PSE chair, we have accomplished some important goals. First, we have conducted a successful search for the new editorial board for our *Journal of Political Science Education.* My thanks to the search committee – Karen Kedrowski, Carlos Huerta, Russell Mayer, and Cherie Strachan – for their time spent on assuring a smooth process. Congratulations go to our new *JPSE* editorial board – Kerstin Hamann, Hutch Pollock, Bruce Wilson, and Rebecca Glazier – who we know will maintain the journal's high standards. Our deepest gratitude to our outgoing *JPSE* board – John Ishiyama, Marijke Breuning, Quentin Kidd, and Steffen Schmidt – who did an excellent job in establishing *JPSE's* solid reputation in the discipline and the scholarship of teaching and learning. This transition is now fully underway.

The next concern is the inclusion of more community college faculty in the section and its activities. Erin Richards, one of our newest PSE board members, has led this charge, and it has already showed success with a record number of community college participants in the APSA Teaching and Learning Conference (TLC) in February. We hope that this trend will continue and that our community college members will begin their own regular column in future editions of the *Political Science Educator.*

This summer, we will need to get working on writing section by-laws per APSA's instructions. I will be assembling a committee for this purpose and hope to have a report available for the APSA section meeting in New Orleans. Please contact me if interested!

This section has made some great strides in advancing the role of teaching and the scholarship of teaching in the discipline. Under the leadership of Dick Simpson and Kerstin Hamann, we have helped to create the APSA Distinguished Teaching Award in the past year. But we need to keep promoting our area of the discipline lest it be drowned out again by those focused only on the traditional research aspects. Quality teaching of political science should remain at the core of APSA's mission. Help me to keep to continue to this push by attending our panels at APSA national in New Orleans, applying for attending the TLC, contributing to the Teaching award endowment, and of course, by maintaining your membership in the section. As always, let me know if you have any ideas that the section can consider for our future activities. Thanks to Shannon Jenkins for her continued service as the *Educator* editor! - *Alison*

2) APSA 2012 Seattle Meeting Recap

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We received a number of worthy submissions for the 2011 APSA Annual Conference in Seattle. The Political Science Education section, along with the Teaching and Learning Division, co-sponsored a total of six panels and a poster session.

Three panels were developed by our division. The first, titled Assessing Effective Teaching Strategies through Experimental Design, clearly demonstrated that the number of submissions relying on rigorous experimental methods to assess the impact of pedagogical approaches continues to grow. The second -- titled What Should They Know? Students from Freshmen Year through Graduate School -- provided research-based insights into curricular goals and assessment plans for all types of political science programs. A third panel, titled Political Scientists' Role in Civic Education: Researcher, Teacher, or Advocate?, explored the various types of contributions that political scientists can make in our efforts to improve the effectiveness of our civic education endeavors.

The three remaining panels addressed efforts to incorporate experiential learning in the classroom, as well as unique approaches to teaching political science courses. Topics ranged from the use of poetry and visual aids to simulations and trips with study abroad.

The papers accepted for presentation reflected a thought-provoking array of approaches to the scholarship of teaching and learning, with some providing detailed case studies of innovative approaches to specific courses and others developing research-informed guidelines for our undergraduate and graduate curriculum.

As you may know, the APSA formula for determining the number of panel slots includes both the number of manuscripts submitted, as well as the size of the audience at APSA. If you want to guarantee a visible presence for teaching concerns at our national conference, please continue to submit your paper proposals and attend the division's panels in September!

3) The Teacher-Scholar: A Teacher-Scholar's Strategy for Success

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In the academy, we often bemoan the "competing" pressures of teaching, scholarship, and service. Yet these requirements of full-time faculty life at BA, MA, and PhD granting institutions need not be viewed as separate types of work, competing for our time and energy. A well-conceived plan can produce synergy that allows a faculty member to gain "triple credit" for a single project thereby increasing personal satisfaction and institutional rewards.

For example, I asked students to serve as fieldworkers, going door-to-door to mobilize voters as part of a randomized field experiment testing the effectiveness of different messages on voter turnout. The non-partisan voter registration drive provided a service to the community, increasing voter knowledge and participation. The training and incorporation of students as fieldworkers enhanced my teaching, providing students with experiential learning about campaigns, elections, voter attitudes, and social science fieldwork. Finally, because the experiment was designed as a research project, using random assignment and a solid experimental design, I was able to publish the result of the field experiment (documenting a statistically significant boost in turnout rates among young voters contacted by the student canvassers). Moreover, I studied the effects of the experience on student knowledge and attitudes using student reaction papers and pre- and post- canvassing surveys, expanding (and publishing) my research and enhancing my assessment of my teaching strategies through the scholarship of teaching and learning. Getting students involved in your research can have benefits for you and for your students. You become more productive as a scholar, while students gain a deeper understanding of the course material and the research process.

Even if you cannot think of ways to involve students directly in your research, there are numerous opportunities to creatively conceptualize and document the links among teaching, scholarship, and service. When I apply for a teaching award, public lectures and media interviews are documented as "teaching beyond the classroom." When applying for a service award, the same activities are a form of "service to the community." When applying for research grants, such public presentations of my scholarship become evidence of public interest in my scholarship and in the questions my scholarship addresses. It is important to frame one's activities and accomplishments properly when applying for grants, awards, raises, or promotions. The reality is that we are teacher-scholars committed to serving the public good. Our work reflects our simultaneous commitment to teaching, scholarship, and service. Each informs the other. They need not be compartmentalized. All three commitments stem from a single identity as a public intellectual, a teacher-scholar committed to furthering the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to sustain a healthy democracy.

4) The Lurking Perils of Course Redesign

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As graduate students, we vividly remember being handed a book and a template of a syllabus before being thrown in front of crowded room of undergrads to teach them everything they needed to know about American government. Our idea of preparation initially was to have enough information to cover fifteen minutes of lecture so we would not be releasing students as soon as they got settled into their seats. In terms of course objectives, it was even simpler—do not faint. With time, of course, teaching became more natural and even enjoyable. Since teaching is not something that one can simply learn, it took experience to gain comfort and to find our voice and style in the classroom. While it is often mentioned that law school does not prepare individuals to be lawyers, doctoral programs do not inherently prepare us for the classroom. Doctoral programs pride themselves on research output and placements. While we continue to make progress in emphasizing the teacher in the teacher-scholar model, only select graduate programs in political science are currently assuring their students leave prepared to face the challenges of classroom teaching.

It was not until our institution decided to undertake course redesign of our American Political Systems course that we had the opportunity to truly reflect on what we do in the classroom and how it impacts students. Face it, as academics, most practice the cottage industry model of teaching. Each semester it seems that teachers either recycle the previous version of the course or start from scratch. Few learn about the most effective content and practices except for the instructor. When you teach the same course every semester (even summers in some cases), it is difficult to remove yourself long enough to actually devote the time and energy necessary to rework sections you believe could be strengthened. Now simply by receiving the *Political Science Educator*, you have demonstrated a desire to learn best practices and see what is working for other faculty members across the country. But we still seem to be a minority in the discipline.

Like many institutions across the country, we are part of an ongoing cycle—one that leads to difficult decisions having to be made. With the economy continuing to seemingly exist on life support, enrollments have spiked with record enrollments for our institution. With more students comes a need for more required courses. This demand leads to one of two options: offering more sections or offering larger sections. And of course, these decisions all have to be made as states routinely slash higher education budgets. As such, we have been forced to undertake an introspective look at what we do in our classrooms and how we can help determine ways to assure students do not suffer from having larger classes or more sections utilized. That is course redesign.

Course redesign focuses on improving quality and reducing cost. The process typically focuses on large-enrollment, introductory courses that reach significant numbers of students. Given that undergraduate enrollments across the country tend to concentrate in only a few academic areas, lowering costs in just a few courses can lead to large amounts of savings. At the baccalaureate level, approximately 25 courses generate almost 35% of enrollment (with the number being even higher for community colleges). Thus, if colleges and universities aim to have an impact on the largest number of students and generate the greatest cost savings, they should focus on these courses.

In 1926, Russell Story wrote that "probably no more significant exposition can be made of the present state of political science than to note the divergence of opinion among its devotees with regard to the content of the introductory and fundamental course in the subject." Having the introductory course selected for course redesign was both a blessing and a curse. As early as 1986, scholars were correctly predicting that "concern with outcomes of higher education and student achievement is likely to become an increasingly prominent part of the policy landscape." Clearly, the push for faculty to determine how to be as effective as possible in assuring student learning is not anything new. Still, our institution's choice to undertake course redesign in our introductory American government course was both a blessing and a curse.

On the positive side, the course is required of all students at our institution and consequently merits attention. For most students, it will be the only political science class they take in their college careers. As a result, it should "meet the needs of the great mass of students on the campus who may soon become responsible citizens…Every year we have an opportunity to encourage thousands of budding dentists, doctors, engineers, and scientists into the paths of good citizenship. We ought to make the most of it." The previous quote was written by Garfinkel and Tierney in 1957, again demonstrating that these ideas are not new but have simply yet to be realized. With majors, the introductory course sets the foundation if they plan on emphasizing American politics in their college years.

At our institution, in any given semester, we will have seven full-time faculty (five tenure-track) and four adjuncts teaching the US Political System course to roughly seven hundred students on four campuses. With this many faculty teaching this many students, there is a strong possibility for course drift. Course drift is what happens when individual faculty members teach the course to their own individual interests and research rather than overall learning goals. When this occurs, there are inconsistent learning experiences for students. Course redesign hopes that coverage will be the same and student outcomes will be similar regardless of the particular instructor the student takes the course with. This is not to say, however, that delivery has to be the same nor that different instructors cannot continue to emphasize certain topics more than others.

On the negative side, such a transition involves faculty having to come together and reaching a consensus on what the actual learning outcomes for the course is. Such faculty buy-in is not necessarily easy to come by. A central tenet of course redesign is that you must redesign the course, not a class. As a result, 100% buy-in is necessary to truly undergo course redesign. Once outcomes are decided upon, there must be an agreed upon manner by which to measure the outcomes. While even on a main campus such outcome measures may be hotly debated, it becomes even more difficult when regional campuses and different calibers of students are involved. Further, course redesign typically revolves around the introduction of new technology into the classroom. Such measures again can impact faculty buy-in as different technologies may be preferred by different faculty members.

With this understanding of the process, we set out to redesign the course. As a university directive, our course was one of five to go through the process (the others involved U.S. history, English composition, freshman seminar, and developmental math). There are six different course redesign models that have been established across the country according to the National Center for Academic Transformation. The supplemental model involves adding outside discussions and assignments to traditional class meetings. The replacement model uses outside discussions and assignments to cover material typically done in traditional class meetings. The emporium model replaces lectures with a learning resource center model, focusing on interactive computer software. Fully online classes remove the traditional classroom setting. The buffet model customizes the learning environment for each student based on personal characteristics. And the linked workshop model provides remedial developmental instruction through tutoring to assure students do not fall behind in coursework. After attending a series of state meetings, our department representatives chose the supplemental model for utilization in U.S. Political Systems due to the flexibility it provides along with the potential for the greatest amount of faculty buy-in.

Once the decision to use the supplemental model was made, we—as a department—had to select a publisher that could provide outside classroom materials for students to use. To do so, we invited three publishers to present platforms that could be used as part of a supplemental model approach to course redesign. Having already been accustomed to selecting a textbook as a committee, we were now forced to weight the merits of the book along with the potential for supplemental, online materials to be used in our instruction. Textbook companies have quickly come to realize the importance of these materials. Some we met with presented solid textbooks with allegedly well-developed online resources that we later learned were actually full of mis-keyed answers and factually incorrect statements. Others were developing new products during our search and were unable to guarantee complete functionality at the time of adoption. The largest variant, however, was how some companies produce book-specific material at a higher expense while others simply recycle the same generic activities across all of their text products. We ultimately selected the company that best convinced us their supplementary materials had been tested and used for years and received positively.

Rather than simply asking all ten faculty members to immediately make the transition to the redesigned course, we instead began pilot testing the supplemental model in two sections per semester. One class was a typical 35-38 student section. The other was a comparatively large, 108 student section, one of a handful of university-wide large-class experiments devised to partially address state budget shortfalls. The initial plan was for the pilot test to last for a year, but it was later decided to test the pilot program for two full academic years in order to assure the best possibility of developing best practices for the remainder of the faculty to follow in the future. During this two year window, other individual faculty members were permitted to begin exploring how they could best use the new technology to supplement their traditional face-to-face class structures. All faculty, with the exception of one, willingly and happily did so. As we learned in the process, however, faculty members may voice concerns about academic freedom, administrative oversight, and a lack of willingness to engage in new technology.

While the difficulty in selecting a model and appropriate textbook and platform were both difficult, the most problematic aspect of course redesign was coming together to determine the course objectives for US Political Systems and how best to measure student improvement on the outcomes. Over the course of a series of meetings, we worked through an understanding of the information we would hope any student who took the course would walk away knowing. From that, we devised a twenty-five question exit assessment designed to judge student performance on relevant objectives. This process was easily the most tedious of any associated with course redesign as faculty bickered over question wording, answer choices, question content, question ordering, when to give the assessment, how to assure students take it seriously, and how to present results anonymously. Different faculty members wished to see their chosen field of expertise more represented in the assessments than other areas, most likely to protect their ability to devote extra class time to these areas. Our political theorist, for example, argued the needs for more than four out of twenty-five questions to focus on the theoretical underpinnings of American democracy. Likewise, our branch campus faculty felt we should have more than two questions strictly asking about Missouri government. In short, we now use an instrument that nobody is essentially happy with but that we can all begrudgingly believe accurately measures some aspect of student learning in the course. It should also be noted that the utilization of end of semester assessments may not sit well with administrative assistants—particularly when they are handed off three days before you wish to give them to seven hundred students. For this reason, pre and post-testing becomes even more difficult despite being the best measure possible.

As of this writing, our university is undergoing its third phase of course redesign projects. The courses from the first phase, including our own, will implement the redesigned courses in all classes in the fall semester of 2012. After seeing less successful outcomes in the larger classes, the university has backed off its efforts to quickly reduce the number of sections offered by moving in that direction. The second and third groups of redesign are currently developing course pilots. Lacking data on full implementation, it is difficult completely assess success. However, anecdotal evidence suggests mixed results. A majority of American government faculty were already using outside assignments, either in the form of discussion forums or other projects, to supplement traditional classes. In that sense, course redesign hardly represents an earth-shattering paradigm shift. Course redesign merely offered us a new toolkit from which to draw resources, although faculty satisfaction with the available resources has been wildly divergent. In addition, adopting a prepackaged course-specific software component to a course introduces a host of technical problems that heretofore did not exist, often placing both faculty and students at the mercy of an off campus support office. These problems present unplanned obstacles to the efficient delivery of course content. Due to discipline specific differences and the adoption of varied redesign models, comparisons across programs are difficult. Our closest analogue in our redesign phase cohort is US history. In fact, the history department experience is strikingly similar to our own, both in adopting a supplemental model and in dealing with one faculty member whose strident opposition challenged redesign buy-in. However, history faculty members describe the redesign process as moderately successful. Thus far, we would agree with this nebulously vague assertion.

5) The Writer's Workshop: A Solution for Better Writing and Learning

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My first experiences teaching students to write occurred during a two-year stint as a Teach For America (TFA) teacher in Las Vegas, NV. I struggled to illuminate the importance of basic writing concepts to my students. My many explanations and written critiques met with thoroughly middling results. Then an experienced teacher took pity on me, pulled me aside, and showed me the writer's workshop (WW) model of writing instruction wherein writing is a teaching tool first and a form of evaluation second. Armed with this new approach my students' writing profoundly improved.

In Political Science we tend to borrow from other fields. Theories of market economics, concepts of personality, or genetics have been borrowed to help us explain and understand political phenomena, rewarding scholars brave enough to look beyond our disciplinary walls. Yet our teaching, especially of social science writing, is one of the few areas in our profession where borrowing is less common. This essay argues that we should borrow the WW model of writing instruction from the neighboring field of Education and that by doing so we can teach our students to learn more through the writing process and to be better writers.[1] Below I lay out the central insight, motivation and basic principles of a writer's workshop. I close with advice for political science professors on how the WW can be applied to research- and analysis-focused courses.

Writer's Workshop: Motivation and Insights

The teaching dilemma of K-12 classroom teachers (i.e. teaching inexperienced, energetic students, focused on anything but sitting still and writing) is actually very similar to the puzzle faced by political scientists teaching undergraduates, many of who are new to political science writing and the college lifestyle. Until recently, the fields of Education and Political Science shared common methods of writing instruction; both employing the "teacher-as-audience" (TAA) model of teaching. The TAA model establishes the professor (or TA) as the authority and sole source of feedback on a student's writing. Students are thus pushed to meet the professor's standards

[1] The WW model is applicable to all disciplines; I examine it with respect to Political Science.

or face the prospect of failing and professors are burdened with providing assessment and feedback to all students. In the TAA model students are writing for a single expert reader, unlike most professional writing where the audiences tend to be mixed groups.

In the last ten years, the model of teaching writing in Education has changed. Under increasing pressure to find efficient and effective methods for improving both student writing and learning, many classroom teachers have experimented with and embraced the WW model of writing instruction. The WW model flips the TAA authority structure on its head, placing the student in the roles of responsible author and critical editor within groups where both writing and feedback are frequent. Perhaps most revolutionary from the perspective of college teaching is that writing in the WW model is both an evaluative tool <u>and</u> a teaching tool.

The WW model's main teaching insight is that writing is actually a social activity. Written work requires at least one writer and reader, and it often includes many of both. Thus employing the WW model requires a shift in how we view student writers, not as solitary producers but as members of writing teams that talk about and improve one another's thinking and writing. According to the WW model, the reason that we have trouble getting students to write better, more carefully, and ultimately to learn more from their writing has nothing to do with our creativity or effort. The WW model suggests that the reason most students write poorly and learn little from writing is that they almost never generate, share, or revise enough pages to produce the editing or revision opportunities required to improve. Thus, the central motivation of the WW model is find ways to provide opportunities for students to write, edit, and revise.[2]

Writer's Workshop: Basic Principles

The WW model comes in many forms; the three principles I examine here are common to every form of WW.

Principle One: Find a system for students to produce writing daily and keep track of it. Writing, like other human endeavors, requires practice. But for a student to practice writing, she must write more frequently than the week preceding a paper's due date (or at 3AM the night before!). Classroom teachers often require writing journals and give students time to write each day, with the explicit understanding that most of what they write will be checked for completion, not content.[3] With more computer-literate and independent students, this activity can be pushed outside of class and online via blogs or electronic journals with dated entries. Entries often run between a paragraph and a page, usually focusing on a single writing skill, task, question, or puzzle.

The difficulty of providing incentives to write daily is the common objection raised

[2] The TAA approach cannot offer feedback frequently and or fast enough to sustain more writing than our students currently do, thus it can never solve quantity dilemma that motivates the WW model. A single professor (or TA) can only meet with so many students and give so much quality feedback within the demands of a semester, neither of which approaches the amount required under the WW model.

[3] This doesn't mean that this writing will not find its way into their papers, only that it isn't required to.

to adopting the WW model. Two useful solutions emerge from Education. First, a regular review for completion of all the journal entries can create accountability.[4] Additionally, students can tag a couple entries to which they would like a brief teacher response (2-3 sentences), generating a social incentive. Second, professors should provide a variety of topics with brief text/video/image support (e.g. a sample introduction or youtube.com video). Across a 15-week course this requires a maximum of sixty, short entries, half of which might have text/video support.[5] Many supported entries could draw from course readings. A quick survey of your latest set of graded papers will likely provide plenty entry topics and ideas for support materials.

Principle Two: The Writer's Circle. The Writer's Circle is the main organizational structure and mechanism for editing and revision in the WW model. It allows students to interact with one another to generate the feedback central to the WW model.[6] Students must meet regularly with their writing circle (a group of 4-5 students), *at least* once every two weeks. The goal of each meeting is to provide critiques of 1-2 student's written work and to promote discussion on the use of concepts, theories or evidence.

During a group's meeting the author will present her work for 3-5 minutes (e.g. "I wanted to produce…a clear logical theory, graphs to visualize a problem, an interesting case study, etc"). Presented works should be between two and five pages. In the 10 minutes following the author's summary the group members give feedback; meanwhile, the author is limited to taking notes and asking clarifying questions of feedback (only responding to questions directly asked of him/her). This meeting structure forces the author to try to understand the suggestion/critiques without getting defensive.[7] When meetings occur outside class, the author should submit a summary of the feedback received from each member as an accountability measure.

Principle Three: Daily writing is directed towards the final product. In the WW model the students determine the contents of their writing, but the professor sets the grander development plan. In the college classroom, a WW model can and should be synced with the progression of the papers required for the course. Rather than viewing writing as an evaluation after content is taught, professors adopting the WW model should use the daily writing/journal review and the Writer's Circle as tools to teach political science and writing skills needed for the final paper/project. Because much of the daily writing will be exploratory in style and substance, professors can use writing exercises to introduce, re-enforce, and review concepts, theories and evidence.[8]

[4] Three times a semester is likely to be sufficient.

[5] This assumes 4 scripted entries (i.e. teacher directed) and 1 unscripted entry (free-write) per week.

[6] Ideally this interaction is in person – though with the prevalence of Skype online meetings are possible.

[7] The group should finish with the first piece before moving on to the second – the goal is not comparison.

[8] An example daily writing assignment might be: "Critique and re-write the first two paragraphs of Huntington's "Clash of

How to Incorporate a WW Model: Research- vs. Analysis-focused Classes

In classes with research writing the WW model of instruction pairs nicely with a staged, larger research project. In this way students can write about literature reviews, theories, study designs and results in advance of those sections being turned in. As a way of forming natural writer's circles, I recommend having students research individual case studies related to an overarching research puzzle common to the group members: *What factors make peacekeeping missions successful? How does religion influence political behavior?* This ensures group members understand the topic, promoting discussion about possible solutions to the research dilemmas that both authors and reviewers are likely to encounter.

In classes where analytical writing is the objective, a WW model is most useful when students respond to course texts rather than in composing their final paper.[9] For example, students could write retorts to (or extensions of) selected readings and gather critiques from their writer's circle about their analysis's form, force, and potential weaknesses. This provides a natural avenue to include contemporary journal articles within the course as response texts.

Civilizations" to be more scientific or even more bombastic."

[9] This is especially true for courses where there is a common final paper question. Where students are producing writing for the exact same question (e.g. Can Locke's conception of property and Rawl's theory of social justice co-exist?), the WW model should be avoided because it leads to heavily interdependent group papers.

Conclusion

Among other things, courses in political science should produce students capable of understanding complex readings, engaging lively debates, and writing thoughtfully about politics. The WW model provides a useful structure to accomplish all these goals, without adding exponentially to the instructor's workload. We should not hesitate to borrow the WW model for use in our classes. If my critiques are the only ones my students hear, how will they ever be prepared for the comments of others? The WW provides a solution.

6) Benefits and Challenges of A Short-Duration Experiential Learning Opportunity

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Short-duration experiential learning programs may provide valuable political learning opportunities, particularly for students who have significant work and family commitments and may otherwise be unable to participate in more time-intensive activities. Although the benefits for both students (Hepburn, Niemi and Chapman 2000; Robinson 2000) and community partners (Tryon et al. 2008) have been found to be greater in longer-term placements, positive impacts from short-term experiential activities have been observed. These outcomes include increased student interest in and knowledge about state and local politics (Van Assendelft 2008); enhanced problem solving, critical thinking and oral communication skills (Van Assendelft 2008); and greater student interest in pursuing careers in the non-profit and sectors (Goss, Gastwirth, and Parkash 2010; Reed et al 2005). Goss, Gastwirth, and Parkash (2010) note that "modest interventions can have modest, but important, effects."

In view of high student work obligations at my university (NSSE 2008), I designed a short-duration experiential learning opportunity to bring local government to life for students in my undergraduate public administration course. The course is an elective for multiple departments; the majority of students are not political science majors. In place of class meetings and assignments for one week of the course, students were required to complete a six-hour "mini-internship" in a municipal office. In Fall 2010, two towns and three cities hosted fifteen students. Mini-internships included placements in the offices of mayors and town managers and police, fire, inspectional services, purchasing, community development, human resources, and veteran's services departments. University contacts within the mayor or town manager offices identified departments that were willing to participate in the program. While I matched students with available placements, supervisors determined activities. Students made scheduling arrangements with supervisors. Student experiences, attitudes and learning outcomes were assessed through written reflections and pre-test/post-test surveys with items adapted from PEW (2009) and Gonsalves, Metchik, and Clausnitzer (2008).

Students Experience Public Administration

Mini-internships afforded students with a range of experiences. Students accompanied supervisors in their duties, including participating in building inspections, riding along with police officers, accompanying firefighters to fire safety and prevention workshops, and attending meetings and conferences. They toured municipal offices and met multiple department heads and staff. They observed office activities, watched staff interact with the public, and had discussions with public administrators about their jobs. Students thrived in the attention given to them by supervisors and staff. As one student wrote, "[my supervisor] really cared about me learning, and definitely took me under his wing. Everyone there really wanted me to learn and understand about what they have to do daily."

Increased Understanding of Public Administration and Local Government

The mini-internships appeared to increase student understanding of public administration and local government. Of the fifteen students, eleven reported that the mini-internship enhanced their understanding of public administration and local government. As one student remarked, "I never really understood public administration until the mini-internship." As another student put it, the most valuable part of the internship was "seeing how decisions are made in the community." Although the forms of local government in these municipalities were reviewed in class, the mini-internship experience gave these lessons meaning. For example, a student, who was introduced by his supervisor to the town manager, later related: "I actually didn't know we had a town manager and that is pretty embarrassing so I'm glad I actually know that now and who he is."

Student assumptions about societal problems in local communities were challenged. A student who was assigned to a police department in a suburban community said that he had expected a low crime rate. Instead, he found, "I was wrong.

With the amount of stores in the mall and a large amount of hotels, there are always thefts and many other crimes committed."

In addition, the mini-internships provided students with a window into the impact of the recession and budget cuts on municipalities. Staff cuts were pronounced in many of the cities and towns. In one office, a student reported that only a staff member and supervisor remained. Another student, who was placed at a fire department, illustrated the tangible effects of budget cuts by noting that the department was forced to operate a fire engine with three fire fighters when five were required.

Discussions with "street level bureaucrats" gave students new insights into policy implementation. One student described the roles of in-service training sessions and updates from the district attorney in keeping officers informed about changes in the law. She also was able to discuss with officers how a recent ballot measure to decriminalize possession of small amounts of marijuana affected drug investigations.

Short-Duration Opportunities and Task Assignments

Because of their short length, mini-internships were more observational than task-oriented. Only eight of the fifteen students reported that they were assigned "a variety of tasks to do" during their mini-internship. These tasks included filing, sending out e-mails, and organizing documents. One student surveyed other cities and towns about veteran's services. Another student drafted a press release. Some students did express frustration that they were not given more responsibilities. However, most students recognized that the short length of the internship limited their ability to contribute to work in the office. As one student reflected, "Even though I did not get to do much involving real public administration work, I did get a lot of insight as to the daily goings-on of a local government agency."

However, students who were assigned tasks did appear to benefit more from the mini-internship program. All eight of the students who were assigned a variety of tasks said the mini-internship experience enhanced their understanding of public administration; seven indicated that the experience increased their understanding of local government. Although all of the students who "neither agree, nor disagree" that they were given a variety of tasks to complete also felt they had gained a better understanding of public administration and local government as a result of the mini-internship, none of the four students without tasks reported that the mini-internship increased their understanding of public administration and only one said the experience increased their understanding of local government.

These findings are consistent with Hepburn, Niemi and Chapman (2000) and others who have maintained that the ability of students to complete meaningful projects is important to experiential learning outcomes. Yet, short-duration experiential learning opportunities limit this important assignment component. Moreover, short-term placements may be hard to sustain because they put a burden on municipal partners, as Tryon et al. (2008) has observed among community organizations, but provide only intangible benefits such as increased support for the public sector and enhanced relationships with universities.

Enhancing Benefits for Students and Municipalities

With suggestions from participants in the 2011 APSA Teaching and Learning Conference Civic Engagement Track and support from the Salem State University Council on Teaching and Learning, I explored strategies to increase student task assignments and improve benefits to municipalities. One recommendation was for the class to take on additional projects for the municipalities. Since the municipal contacts did not see a need for additional projects, I instead implemented several other modifications to increase the preparation of students and to foster communication between students and supervisors in advance of mini-internships in Fall 2011. Mini-internships were moved to later in the semester when students would have more familiarity with public administration concepts. Students were required to complete more research on their agencies before the mini-internships than in the previous semester. Students were required to identify and share with supervisors their learning objectives and to clarify expectations for activities in advance of the mini-internship.

Fall 2011 post-test survey results suggest these modifications may have improved the mini-internship experience. In Fall 2011, almost students were assigned tasks. In addition, as Table 1 shows, slightly larger percentages of students reported interactions with personnel and believed that the experience enhanced their understanding of public administration and local government.

The results of the mini-internship program over the past two years suggest that even short-duration placements can contribute to student understanding of public administration and local government. Activities such as mini-internships may offer important political learning opportunities at universities in which students face competing demands on their time from work and family obligations. Although short-term placements may limit opportunities for students to engage in meaningful work assignments and benefits to placement hosts, small program modifications may overcome some of these difficulties.

Table 1. Experiences of Students in Mini-Internship Program in Fall 2010 and Fall 2011

	Fall 2010 (N=15)	Fall 2011 (N=13)
I interacted with staff in a department.	86.7%	92.3%
I had professionals in the community take an interest in me.	73.3%	84.6%
I had a variety of tasks to do.	53.3%	92.3%
I had experiences that challenged me to think about my career goals.	53.3%	69.2%
I was able to observe interactions among staff.	80%	92.3%
I was able to observe interactions between staff and the public.	80%	84.6%
I had discussions with a professional/supervisor.	86.7%	100%
The mini-internship enhanced my understanding of public administration.	73.3%	84.6%
The mini-internship enhanced my understanding of local government	73.3%	92.3%

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7) Active Learning in Public Law Courses: Mock Senate Judiciary Committee Supreme Court Confirmation Hearing Simulation

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"The basic premise is that simulations can be an effective teaching tool because they engage students and make them active participants in the learning process." (Kaufman, 59)

"[The Simulation provided] the ability to apply information from the texts and lectures to real life in the best way possible in the classroom. It was also nice to get to work more with classmates." (anonymous student survey response, Spring 2009)

Introduction to Law and Politics is an introductory course about the judicial process; in the course we study the courts as the third branch of American government. The sources, nature, and legitimacy of the judiciary's power in our constitutional democracy are explored. We examine the legal and political processes and products of Supreme Court decision-making and the response of the political system to the Court's decisions. We also study the role of state courts and lower federal courts in our judicial system.

One of the topics covered in the course is judicial selection. I expect students to learn about the various methods used to select state and federal judges and to discuss the impact of these methods on the background, qualifications, and behavior of those judges. During the week that we cover judicial selection, students participate in a Mock Senate Judiciary Committee Supreme Court Confirmation Hearing.

The nomination and confirmation of U.S. Supreme Court Justices provides a national forum in which Americans engage in a discussion about the appropriate method of constitutional interpretation, the proper role of the Supreme Court in our constitutional democracy, and the assorted complex legal issues confronting our federal courts. During the simulation, students become U.S. Senators (or the Supreme Court nominee) for a day – with the power to influence who will be the 113th Justice to sit on the Supreme Court of the United States. Students are able to take what they've learned from the assigned readings and lecture material and to apply that knowledge in a practical setting. During the simulation, students engage in their own version of the "vital national seminar."[10]

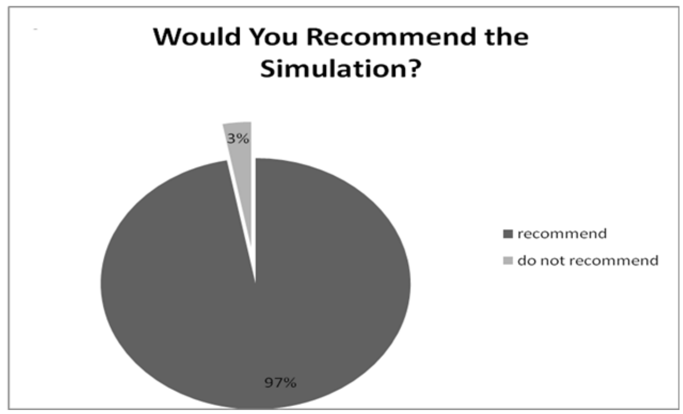
In this article, I will discuss logistics – simulation design and implementation – as well as learning outcomes – how this mock Senate Judiciary Committee Confirmation Hearing affected what students learned about the federal judicial selection process.

[10] Eugene V. Rostow. "The Democratic Character of Judicial Review." Vol. 66, No. 2 (December 1952) *Harvard Law Review,* p. 208, referring to the Justices of the Supreme Court as "teachers in a vital national seminar."

I will evaluate the effectiveness of the simulation as an educational tool based on an analysis of the simulation evaluations that I have collected at USF St. Petersburg during the last six years as well as on my observations as the instructor.

<u>The Mock Senate Judiciary Committee Assignment:</u>

This simulation is a mock Senate Judiciary Committee Supreme Court Confirmation Hearing. Students play one of the following roles: nominee, Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Ranking Minority Member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator on the Judiciary Committee, witness testifying before the Judiciary Committee, President Pro Temp of the Senate, or Senator not on the Judiciary Committee. We follow the general format of the Senate Judiciary Committee, condensing a process that typically lasts for several days into one class period.[11]



[11] Please e-mail the author for a copy of the course materials described here, which includes a detailed description of the simulation format, logistics, role descriptions, and the hypothetical nominee as well as the survey instrument.

Preparation for the Simulation

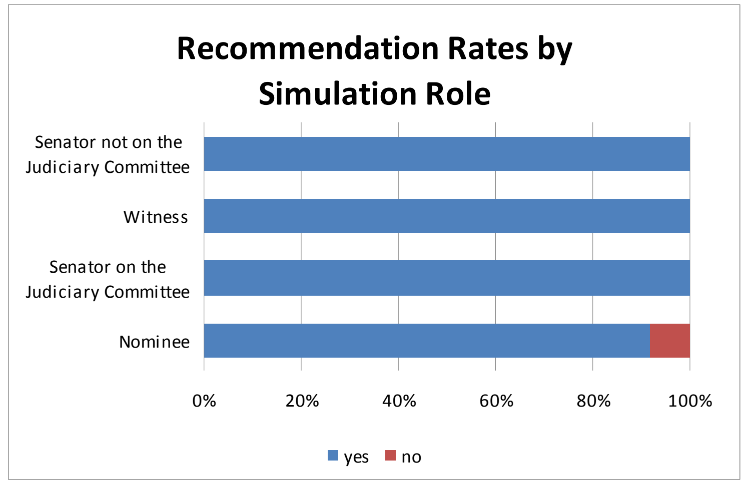
Most importantly, students are urged to consult the assigned readings and lecture material that relates to federal judicial selection. The objective of the simulation assignment is to deepen students' understanding of the confirmation process, and their participation in the simulation needs to demonstrate that they are drawing on knowledge gained in class and in the reading assignments.

In class we also watch and discuss video clips from past confirmation hearings. C-Span has an extensive video library. I also suggest that students consult the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee website. Students may also consult the transcripts of all Supreme Court Confirmation Hearings back to 1971 at:

http://www.gpoaccess.gov/congress/senate/judiciary/scourt.html

<u>Learning Outcomes:</u>

I developed this simulation when I taught *Law and Politics* at Rutgers University. I have conducted this simulation at USF St. Petersburg for the last 6 years. After each simulation, I administer an anonymous survey. After compiling the survey results for Spring 2006, Summer 2007, Summer 2008, Spring 2009, and Summer 2010, I found that 98% of the students said they would recommend that students take the *Law and Politics* course with the Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing simulation. On the survey form, students are asked to mark which role they played during the simulation. I hypothesized that students who played the roles of the nominee and the Senators on the Judiciary would have rated the simulation experience more favorably than those in other roles (e.g., Senator not on the Judiciary Committee or an interest group representative). However, I found that regardless of the role, students overwhelmingly recommended the simulation.



In their survey responses, students reported that they had a better understanding of the Senate confirmation process. See the below "word cloud" representing student responses to the open-ended question, "What do you consider to be the most important thing (or things) you learned from the simulation?" The overwhelming answer: "Process." One student answered that he/she learned about "the process of confirming a nominee along with all of the factors that could potentially derail the process." (Spring 2009) Another responded that "Having a hands-on feel helps to have the process sink in. It was also a good way for the class to interact with each other." (Summer 2010) Another typical response: "[I learned about] the nomination process. The research and preparation taught me a lot." (Summer 2010)

During the Summer 2010 semester, only 25% of the students reported participating in a simulation in a college course. Half of those students who did have experience with a simulation were students in my *U.S. Constitutional Law I* course which includes a mock U.S. Supreme Court oral argument (held in one of the courtrooms at Stetson College of Law). Of those students not in *Constitutional Law*, 100% reported that the Senate Judiciary Committee simulation was better than their previous simulation experience.

I have made modifications to the simulation every year based on my observations as well as in response to student feedback on the surveys. For example, I have lengthened the time allotted to the simulation from about an hour to closer to two hours. The class meets once a week for three hours, and I used to deliver the judicial selection lecture during the class period that we would conduct the simulation. Now, I deliver that lecture at least a week before we conduct the simulation. I instituted the role of a Timer with flash cards. (The Chair of the Judiciary Committee used to be responsible for this, but it was too much for one person to run the hearings and worry about the timing.) I have also lengthened the role descriptions and included more biographical information about the Nominee. I have added more information about the Democratic and Republican parties as well. We now watch and discuss clips from previous confirmation hearings (and I provide links so that students can watch more of the hearings as part of their preparation).

While the assignment continues to evolve over time, one thing remains constant: students report that they have a much deeper understanding of the federal judicial selection process in general and the Senate confirmation process in particular as a result of the Senate Judiciary Committee simulation.

Conclusion

Students in *Law and Politics* universally agreed that the simulation enhanced their understanding of the federal judicial selection process, and 98% recommend that their colleagues take the section that offers a Senate Judiciary Committee Confirmation Hearing simulation. Yet only 10.8% of the students surveyed (across all semesters) have participated in a previous simulation experience. As one scholar concluded after surveying the literature, "Research indicates enhanced student involvement, improved student achievement, and positive student attitudes toward the course as a result of using simulation." (Olson, et al., 1020) Given the data that supports the use of simulations as an effective teaching tool, more faculty should look for ways to integrate active learning strategies in their courses.

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8) Announcements

Elizabeth A. Bennion was awarded the 2011 Eldon F. Lundquist Fellowship, the top award for an Indiana University South Bend faculty member. The Lundquist Fellowship is awarded to a meritorious faculty member of Indiana University, South Bend Campus, who has exhibited excellence in teaching, scholarly achievement, and diversified relevant service, including community service throughout the Michiana region. This prestigious fellowship has been awarded only seven times in the last ten years.

Any announcements or information for future newsletters should be sent to Shannon Jenkins at sjenkins@umassd.edu.

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Shannon Jenkins, Newsletter Editor.