

Southern Dialogue

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Collaborative Pedagogy: Theatre and Social Work students

learning together

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Interdisciplinary collaboration exposes students to perspectives about subject areas that are not often possible when learning a subject by itself. In such an environment, students and professors can mutually benefit from the inter-curricular learning opportunities and cross-pollination of disciplines. But the logistics of such an endeavor can be daunting, however fertile the potential outcomes may be. This article describes a recent collaboration between two instructors in theatre and social work, including the interests, concerns, obstacles and successes of the project. In keeping with the collaborative nature of their ongoing work, the authors have chosen a dialogic interview format for this article.

EK: I have been teaching Social Work 390, Interviewing Skills for Social

Work Practice, for several years. Social work majors take this course the semester prior to their year-long internship at a social service agency. The learning objectives for the course include developing awareness of one's preferred ways of relating with others, enhancing one's interpersonal skillfulness in social work activities, and establishing a beginning ability to evaluate one's interpersonal skillfulness and identify further areas for growth. Most students have not had much, if any, experience working in the social services, so it is critical to find the right kinds of learning activities that help them learn how to effectively communicate with people who are having difficulties before they begin their internship year.

Various efforts up to this point have either demanded more of the students than what they were able to execute (such as conducting assessments with clients in the Communication Disorders Clinic), provided opportunities for them to speak with clients without the ability to evaluate

their work (due to privacy regulations that prohibit videotaping the conversations at social service agencies), or provided opportunities for them to videotape role plays of client scenarios with each other, without the experience of authenticity. Students tended to feel insufficiently challenged or insufficiently supported, depending on the activity. I knew that many professional preparatory programs use professionally trained actors to simulate clients and patients for various competence assessments. I became interested in exploring the potential for actors or acting students to offer simulated client experiences as a middle ground that would: 1) feel "real enough" for students to seriously engage in the activity; 2) be videotaped for later analysis by each student, by myself, and by other students; and 3) be scheduled to occur in the middle of the semester, so that students could use these experiences, their analysis and my feedback to guide their learning in the remainder of the semester. I approached Professor Kaia Monroe

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From the Editor

Autumn greetings! We hope you are harvesting a bounty of successes this semester!

Just as seeds cannot yield crops without the help of sun or rain, enriching teaching and learning experiences cannot be garnered without partnerships among colleagues, mentors and students. So I am thrilled that "collaboration" unfolded as the focus of this semester's issue—it

was purely unintentional but evidences our faculty's dedication to engaged learning and alliances among all members of the university community.

As always, *Southern Dialogue* aims to energize faculty and inspire dialogue about teaching and learning. We hope to cultivate and maintain a stronger sense of community among colleagues.

I cannot stress enough that this is *your* publication. Please feel free to send your article ideas, anecdotes, news and project results to me at hudsonj1@southernct.edu.

All best wishes for the remainder of the semester,

Jennifer A. Hudson
Editor



“It is my belief that whereas the 20th century has been a century of war and untold suffering, the 21st century should be one of peace and dialogue.”
–The Dalai Lama

Collaborative Pedagogy (cont'd from page 1)

in the Theatre department and asked whether she would be interested in some interdisciplinary collaboration.

KM: When Dr. Keenan approached me about [the] project between our classes, I eagerly embraced the opportunity. Not only was I eager to collaborate with a colleague in another discipline, but I also felt strongly that our pedagogical needs could dovetail into a rewarding project for each of our classes. The targeted learning goals for my Theatre 220 Acting I class were: 1) learning a process for detailed, in-depth text analysis, including character and circumstance analysis (the conscious application of first hand experience, observation, empathy, and imagination to acting choices for a heightened truth); 2) facility with sense memory and emotional memory techniques; and 3) an introduction to improvisation. It was the improvisation component that I'd felt was weak in previous semesters and I was searching out methods to augment my teaching of it.

Known primarily outside of the discipline as a comedy technique, improvisation is, in actuality, an essential acting tool. It teaches actors to trust their guts, forcing them to respond to stimulus before their analytical /critical mind can intervene and diminish creativity. When applied to the character - building phase of actor training, improvisation can help an actor discover facets of a persona otherwise undiscovered through text analysis.

I'd had direct experience with the kind of program Dr. Keenan was hoping to create, and knew first hand the artistic benefit of “playing” in a simulated environment for pedagogical purposes. During my graduate studies, I worked with the university's medical school in a simulated doctor/patient program. As trained actors, my classmates and I were given our

characters as we walked in the room – “You're getting a terminal cancer diagnosis...we'd love some tears” – and the rest was left to our imaginations. However, I was interested in my Acting I students going through the process of analyzing a text (in this instance, a case history) followed by an improvised scene that drew upon the foundation of their “book” work.

EK: With the support of a Curriculum-Related Activities Grant, I revised the content and assignments for my course. First, I wrote two vignettes of two different client scenarios for my students and acting students to role play at two different points in the semester. In the first vignette, social work students were instructed to engage in a relationship with the “client” by interacting in ways that would help them get to know the person and understand the “client's” primary concerns. Between the first and second interviews, an “event” happened in the “client's” life that is generally associated with a great deal of intense emotion. In the second episode, social work students were instructed to mutually develop a focus and begin to facilitate change with the “client.” Social work students analyzed their videotapes and wrote papers about their effectiveness and areas for growth using feedback provided by the acting student.

Second, I revised the readings and classroom activities for the course. Rather than present a discrete skill each week (a model typically used in social work education), I worked more inductively, asking students to complete an initial assessment, to reflect on what they are already able to do, identify areas for learning, and begin to actively consider how people make changes. I made this decision after watching student videotapes, reading student papers and receiving student feedback

over several years. My observations conveyed the limits of a linear skill-based instruction. In previous years, students could accurately identify a skill and give an example, but were consistently unable to flexibly respond to unexpected interactions, adopting a more stereotypical social work posture. This year I used weekly message board postings, spontaneous role plays that addressed student's questions, and clips of several students' videos with an acting student in the classroom. Overall, students were more engaged in their learning and more consistently demonstrated a basic ability to flexibly enact the basic social work skills.

KM: The client scenarios Dr. Keenan wrote up provided fertile material for my students to dissect, expand upon and improvise from. Utilizing the text analysis paradigm set forth by Konstantin Stanislavsky and Uta Hagen, my students were given the task of creating vivid, emotionally charged connections to the case histories by fleshing out the client scenarios with imagined personal details in 2-3 page essays. The written analyses assisted the student actors in identifying major character traits and mining out truthful behavior both objectively and empathetically and also stimulated some excellent discussions on the long-term impact such scenarios could potentially have on an individual. The second interview was more of a platform for my students to flex their newly acquired emotional release skills, resulting in unplanned outbursts and emotional events.

While working with a relative stranger was positive for the social work students, it was a surprising obstacle for mine. One of the necessary components in a successful improvisation is “keeping stakes high” – leaning into conflict, not away from it and making bold acting

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SOUTHERN DIALOGUE GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS AND EDITORIAL POLICIES

Southern Dialogue gladly considers:

- Short reports from different disciplines on classroom practices
- Articles that focus on practical ideas related to teaching and learning in higher education and explorations of issues and challenges facing university faculty today.
- Announcements of work-in-progress and requests for collaborators
- Announcements of conference presentations, publications, community outreach and creative projects
- Book and website reviews.

Submissions must be in electronic format (copied and pasted directly into the body of the e-mail or as a MS Word file). Send to Jennifer A. Hudson, Editor, at HUDSONJ1@southernct.edu.

The Editorial Board reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity, and assumes no responsibility for the views expressed in the contributions selected for publication. Submissions accepted for publication may be published in both print and electronic copy. All rights revert to the author(s) upon publication.

Peer Pressure, Peer Power: Toward systematic collaborative peer review in the Composition and Writing Across the Curriculum classroom

Steven Corbett
English Department

The Composition Program at Southern aligns itself closely with the Writing Across the Curriculum Program. Together we work to help faculty provide the best possible instruction in writing to students across the disciplines. One of our most successful initiatives has been in our encouragement of the practice of peer review and response.

What Is Peer Review and Why Do It?

Peer review is more than just having students read and comment on each other's papers. The idea of peer review extends into what academics do—to the idea of disciplinarity. We research and write. Then we submit our writing to "peer reviewers" who comment on our essays in different ways, and either accept or reject

our attempts at publication. I believe that for students, we should think of peer review in similar ways. Peer review can be "sold" to students for what it really is—the process through which academic writing and communication gets done.

Peer review can get the power of student-student/student-teacher reciprocal teaching and learning moving full steam ahead. Rather than having the teacher play the

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Enhancing Out-of-Class Communication : Ten suggestions

Bonnie Farley-Lucas
Faculty Development/Communication

Out-of-class communication is interaction outside the formal classroom setting that may be initiated by either students or teachers, including advising, students seeking out faculty to ask questions about class content, faculty involvement in student organizations, and/or student-faculty discussions about non-class related issues (Nadler & Nadler, 2001). When students engage in out-of-class communication with instructors, student-teacher relationships are more interpersonal in nature and are positively associated with student reports of learning (Dobrinsky & Frymeir, 2004; Frymeir & Houser, 2000). Students learn more when they collaborate with others in mastering material, interact with faculty inside and outside the classroom, and take active roles in their learning experiences (Kuh, 2003). Out-of-class communication is the wellspring for continued academic exchange and mentoring.

Electronic consultations via e-mail have largely replaced traditional office hours. Students favor e-mail

contact with faculty for many reasons, including efficiency, availability, approachability, the ability to clarify course material and concepts, and personal/social reasons (Kelly, Keaten, & Finch, 2004; Waldeck, Kearney & Plax, 2001). Faculty favor e-mail contact for its efficiency, timeliness, ability to allow reticent students to communicate more freely, and the potential for increased student engagement outside of class (Bloch, 2002; Duran, Kelly, & Keaten, 2005). Since e-mail is such a critical vehicle for contact, faculty should see this as their primary opportunity to connect both academically and socially (Hudson & Farley-Lucas, 2008).

If students perceive the instructor as caring for students as individuals and as concerned with student success then students are more likely to seek outside contact (Farley-Lucas & Sargent, in progress). Students do care if instructors care about them, and they are even likely to value instructors' helpfulness above their perceived knowledge or academic abilities (Meyers, 2009). The first step, then, is to enhance students' perceptions of caring in the class-

room. Immediacy is the term used to describe behaviors intentionally focused on creating a sense of closeness with others (Gorham, 1988). The following strategies enhance verbal immediacy: addressing students by name, providing feedback on student work, asking questions to encourage student input; using humor or personal experiences; asking for student feedback on assignments; referring to the class as "our class;" praising students' comments and input; and encouraging discussions on topics of interest to students, particularly those beyond the classroom (Gorham, 1988). Physical immediacy can be increased by: using gestures while talking; giving eye contact to the class as a whole and to each student; smiling at the class as a whole, and to each student; moving around the room while teaching; using a variety of vocal expressions; and maintaining a relaxed posture (Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey, 1987).

Effective classroom management can also contribute to out-of-class communication by explicitly inviting student *Continued on page 4*

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choices. Some of my students had difficulty doing this with Dr. Keenan's class, reporting rudeness or embarrassment, especially when faced with shock or surprise from their "social worker." But those who were able to move beyond initial social awkwardness and embrace the performative aspect of the situation found success – their characters began to feel organic and immediate.

Obstacles: The first issue that came up in the project was communication between paired students. We paired the students based on similar availability, but gave out personal information only to the social work students. This proved to be a frustration when students attempted to schedule the first interview. The solution, we believe, will be allowing the students to have some voice in choosing their partners, and sharing complete class roster email addresses with both groups.

The biggest obstacle in the project was technology: Although it provided us with wonderful opportunities to share work, our students had differing technological abilities and there were times when the technology simply did not function. Social work students were asked to purchase Flip Videos, which have the capacity to record up to 60 minutes of video and to share it in a variety of ways. However, the technology involved details of getting copies of the videos to each instructor added a layer of frustration for all involved in this project. The post-mortem solution was to ask acting students to purchase Flash drives to be "handed in" in lieu of a disk, avoiding the downloading and copying issues.

Results: Students and instructors had a great experience learning together across disciplines. This collaboration was ultimately quite successful, providing social work and acting students with opportunities to take a risk and try new things in a supportive, yet challenging environment. We are excited to have found a learning activity that meets social work students at their learning edge, and are pleased to have found an out-of-class project for Acting I that both cultivates improvisational skills and emphasizes the need for such skills. Finally, we plan on sharing more of our curriculum and learning goals with each others' classrooms. We hope to make this not simply an interdisciplinary class project, but a rich teaching opportunity deeply rooted in the liberal arts tradition.

Enhancing Out-of-Class Communication: Ten suggestions (cont'd from page 3)

contact. Following are ten specific strategies that students reported as particularly effective for encouraging out-of-class contact (Farley-Lucas & Sargent, in progress).

1. Most obviously, faculty need to maintain, and be present for, office hours for student contact, keep scheduled appointments, and make time for students when they need additional help.
2. Arrive to class early and be prepared to stay after class (or in the hallway) to accommodate easy contact when students are most likely to have questions.
3. Include a syllabus statement inviting students to visit during office hours. Include a "by appointment" option, since your office hours are likely to conflict with their class schedules.
4. Let students know on the first day, with regular reminders throughout the semester, that you are available for extra help, and that you enjoy talking with students, particularly about the course, research, the field, related professions, and graduate studies.
5. Use e-mail to connect socially and academically. In addition to prompt and brief responses, include a friendly opening and closing. Send periodic e-mails to the class to offer assistance on projects as they progress through the semester.
6. Write your e-mail and office hours on the board each class and continue to stress that you welcome their questions, comments, and discussions.
7. Learn student names as soon as possible. Recognize and greet students when you encounter them in the hallways or around campus.
8. Provide specific feedback on course projects and allow opportunities for revisions prior to assigning a final grade on major projects.
9. Arrange mandatory mid-term consultations with each student to get acquainted, review progress, provide assistance as needed, and help set goals.
10. Provide your home phone number or cell phone number in case students run into "emergencies." Although students most likely will never call you, they appreciate this caring gesture.

In summary, caring behaviors enacted in the classroom, together with invitations for out-of-class contact, entice students to engage in out-of-class communication. For

instructors wishing to actively engage students in academic discourse, facilitate a deeper understanding of the discipline and profession, and serve as advisors and mentors, several suggestions have been provided for increasing opportunities for out-of-class communication. Combined with a strong focus on instructional quality, explicit attention to caring and contact contribute to student success.

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“An impressive collection of studies has shown that participation in well-functioning cooperative groups leads students to feel more positive about themselves, about each other, and about the subject they’re studying.”
–Alfie Kohn from Punished By Rewards



“Tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I’ll understand.”
–Chinese Proverb

Peer Pressure, Peer Power (cont’d from page 3)

role of the all-wise, all-knowing professor, systematic collaborative peer review can send a loud and clear message to students that they have much to teach as well as learn—that the processes of teaching and learning go together quite well and make each other, and everyone involved, much stronger. By conducting peer review in a systematic and collaborative way—by making it central to our curriculum—students and teachers can learn to *internalize* the writing strategies and moves they wish to continue using and developing (and avoid less-desired strategies and moves) so they can *externalize* these writing techniques in other composing and communicative situations.

Some Things to Consider

- *The huge variety of ways/methods of peer review*

I think the way to approach peer review (as with most teaching) is with an *experimental attitude*. Start having students read and comment on each other’s papers, and soon you will begin to make adjustments that suit your—and your students’—needs and desires.

- *How to form groups/partners*

An important initial choice involves how to form groups. Experts debate on the optimal size of

groups, but a good working group should be between 3-5 students. Again, you can experiment with groups of 2, 3, 5. Groups should be formed early in the term. Group members should exchange contact information. These group partnerships can also be utilized for other collaborative learning endeavors and projects.

- *How to give comments/feedback*

You will want to explore and develop the many ways students can give each other feedback. Do you want to have students give feedback during class or out of class? Do you want students to talk about their essays before giving written feedback or after? How much *conversation* should be included in peer review? (For example, having the reviewer read the essay and supply verbal suggestions while the reviewee writes commentary can work quite well.) Should commentary be handwritten or digital/typed?

- *How to train students*

Importantly, students must be provided with ongoing, iterated training in peer review. Experts encourage students to focus on higher-order concerns (HOCs) like claim, structure, and evidence first in early drafts and later-order concerns (LOCs) like grammar and spelling in later more final

drafts. It is also a good idea to encourage a mix of praise and constructive criticism. Many students feel they don’t have the authority or expertise to give constructive criticism. But ALL students can be taught the value of giving substantial, detailed, and specific *analytic praise* to work they feel they have nothing to “criticize.”

- *How to assess*

You will need to develop methods of assessing peer review in order for students to truly take it seriously. In my writing courses, peer review counts as 20% of their overall grade. Assessment then becomes integral (as all good assessment should) to how you are training students to tutor each other with their writing and writing processes.

- *Teaching while Learning*

Finally, peer review is a truly reciprocal learning experience—we will learn as much if not more than our students. We can learn to be better responders to student writing. We can learn to be better at, and perhaps conduct more frequent, one-to-one conferences. We can learn the value of multi-draft (even portfolio) writing instruction. And we can learn just how much students have to teach (and learn from) us and one another.

Faculty Activities


Mia Brownell, Art, was a featured artist in Volume 13 of the popular arts magazine, *Hi-Fructose* (see "Mia Brownell: Skeptical Realism," pp. 16-17, 30-33).

C. Patrick Heidkamp, Geography, was invited to present his paper "Measuring Economic Rights in the USA: A Spatial Analytic Perspective" at the *Human Rights in the USA* Conference organized by the Human Rights Institute at UCONN, October 22-24. He also co-authored a paper with Shareen Hertel and Lyle Scruggs of the Political Science Department at UCONN titled "Human Rights and Public Opinion: From Attitudes to Action" in *Political Science Quarterly* 124(3): 1-17.

Elliott Horsch, Physics, was chosen as the platinum recipient of the 2009 Connecticut Quality Improvement Award (CQIA) Innovation Prize. He was also awarded another grant from the National Science Foundation to continue his research on binary stars.

Jennifer A. Hudson, Faculty Development, served as Associate Editor for the current volume of *The International Journal of Learning*. Two of her poems, "Golden Malice" (finalist for the 2009 Rita Dove Poetry Award) and "The Lament of Hephaistos while in Oceanic Delirium," will appear in the November issue of *Dark Lady Poetry*.

C. Michele Thompson, History, presented a paper July 29th at the symposium "Communities and Communication in East Asian Sciences" as part of the *XXIII International Congress on History of Science and Technology* in Budapest, Hungary. She received a travel grant from the D. Kim Foundation to fund travel to Budapest. She also presented a paper at the sponsored symposium "Property Rights in Vietnam" at the Harvard University Asia Center.



Congratulations to Paul Petrie (English) on receiving the 2009 Faculty Scholar Award!

Fall 2009 Faculty Development Grants

Steven Corbett, English, "Training Workshops for Campus Writing Center and Tutorial Center"

Steven Corbett and **Ilene Crawford**, English, "Responding to ENG 110, 111, and 112 Student Writing: Incorporating Best Practices from Rhetoric and Composition Studies"

Scott Ellis, English, "Enriching the teaching Preparation for First-Time Composition"

Bonnie Farley-Lucas, Faculty Development/Communication, "New Faculty Network Program"

Adam Goldberg, **Scott Graves**, and **Lara Smetana**, Elementary Education, "Utilizing SMART Board Technology in the Classroom"

Krystyna Gorniak, Philosophy, "Knowledge Management and Democracy: Some Moral Issues and Social Dilemmas"

Armen Marsoobian, Philosophy, "Philosophy Department Colloquium

Series and Southern-Yale Philosophy Symposium: *The Philosophy of Philosophy*"

Constance Mindell, Social Work, "Returning Veterans and Their Families: Mental Health Issues and Treatments"

Pina Palma, World Languages and Literatures, "Eighth Annual Medieval Studies Conference"

Vivian Shipley, English, "Group Conversations, Individual Consultations and Workshops with Editors"

Jeff Slomba, Art, "A Practical Introduction to Computer-Assisted Design Applications and tools Used for 3-Dimensional Design and Object Production"

Christine Unson, Public Health, "Increasing Departmental Capacity to Utilize National Health-Related Datasets for Thesis Advising and Faculty Research"

Congratulations to all awardees for the Fall 2009 semester!

Spring 2010 Request for Proposals

Applications for the Spring 2010 semester that will enhance faculty abilities as professionals in the areas of instruction, research and creative endeavors are now being solicited. Proposals that involve collaboration between and among departments are especially encouraged.

See the RFP at https://www.southernct.edu/faculty_development/uploads/textWidget/wysiwyg/documents/FDACRFPFormSpr2010.pdf

Questions regarding the application process or other issues may be directed to Jennifer Hudson, via e-mail to hudsonj1@southernct.edu. Completed proposals must be received by **Monday, November 23, 2009, by 4:00 PM** in the Office of Faculty Development, EN B 106, or as an e-mail attachment to Jennifer Hudson at hudsonj1@southernct.edu. Recipients of awards will be notified by Monday, December 14, 2009.

Send your article ideas and/or feedback to
Jennifer A. Hudson, Editor, at
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The mission of the Office of Faculty Development is to support teaching and learning at all levels and in all contexts in which instruction occurs at Southern. The OFD supports faculty in their roles as teachers, scholars, and members of the university and wider community.

The Office of Faculty Development is committed to promoting a spirit of innovation, collaboration, and love of learning, as well as enhancing a sense of collegiality among faculty as they expand their intellectual, teaching, and scholarly horizons. In pursuing these goals, the OFD works to enhance the intellectual climate and promote open and ongoing dialogue among all members of the university community. It serves as an advocate for academic initiatives and enterprises that relate to teaching and learning through a variety of programs, activities, and resources in achieving the university's mission. The vision of the OFD is to create an environment at Southern that facilitates and promotes effective teaching, professional development, research, university service, and integration of new instructional technologies.



Upcoming Faculty Development Events...Mark Your Calendars!

New Faculty Mentoring and Mentoring Network

Monday, November 2, 1:10 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., EN B 121 A, "Balancing Teaching, Research, Service (and Life)"

Wednesday, December 2, 1:10 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., EN B 121 B, "Next Steps: Spring Semester and Beyond"

Friday, December 4, 12:10 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., EN B 121 A, "New Faculty and Mentoring Pot Luck Celebration" (Please RSVP for Pot Luck to Michele Salamone, salamonem1@southernct.edu)

Department Chairs' Institute

Friday, December 4, 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., EN B 121 A & B

Writing Across the Curriculum Practical Pedagogy Workshop

Wednesday, November 18, 1:00 p.m. to 1:45 p.m., EN D 253 (English Common Room)

Summer Tech Tables

Thursday, November 5, and Thursday, December 3, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Faculty Dining Room, Connecticut Hall

Building Community Connections

Friday, November 6, and Friday, December 4, 1:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Faculty Dining Room, Connecticut Hall