



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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Involving Administrators in the Teaching Process: A Team-Teaching Approach

As the division head of Professional and Technical Studies at Santa Fe Community College, I am required to administer approximately 15 programs (largely using part-time faculty), as well as to teach one course per term within my division. This is a challenge for me, as well as for other division heads. We often find ourselves torn between the pressing and conflicting demands of administration and teaching, but we must find creative ways of being effective at both.

In past years, I have vowed not to allow my teaching to suffer, regardless of the time constraints. When I have had to prioritize administrative and teaching duties, administrative duties have most frequently suffered the most from low prioritization—I have a profound sense of the responsibility that comes with being an instructor.

For the past semester I have experimented with a new approach to this problem, with some very positive results. I theorized that if I were to team-teach a course with a fellow instructor, the burdens of preparation, grading, etc., would be lighter and would allow me more flexibility to respond to administrative demands. With this in mind, I arranged to team-teach one of our computer-assisted drafting courses with a part-time instructor; my role was primarily "roving tutor" for students who were working in a predominantly hands-on laboratory format.

This approach resulted in the following benefits to students, to my fellow instructor, and to the administration of my division.

- As a "roving tutor," I have had the flexibility to assist the instructor in paying special attention to students having difficulties with the complex command structure of the computer-assisted drafting program—thus reducing the amount of interruptions to the class without neglecting the "slower" students in the process.
- The experience of working with a part-time instructor on a regular basis has been invaluable. Contact with part-time instructors is generally limited; and the opportunity for mentoring, observing, and

providing constructive feedback is rare. My role as a tutor/team-teacher has allowed me to get continual feedback from students on how they are learning and to share this feedback with the lead instructor. My in-class activities provide me with insight into typical problems encountered by students and instructors, and give me the opportunity to develop cooperative solutions.

- Working in the classroom without the constant pressure of lesson plan preparation, paper grading, etc., has provided me with valuable resources (time and information) to use in evaluating the program's teaching methodology, curriculum, and textbooks—enhancing my administrative decision-making skills in regard to these issues.

Both my teaching and administrative skills have been enhanced by involvement in this team-teaching approach. The time spent away from the office has been spent mentoring, enhancing instruction, and gathering valuable information about the programs. Since I do not have primary responsibility for the organization and leadership of the class, I feel less torn between students and administrative paperwork, class preparation, committee meetings, and so on. The students and the part-time instructor have benefited from this arrangement, as well. The instructor welcomes my observations and assistance, and the students are pleased to have an extra in-class resource for information and encouragement.

Combining teaching with administration creates a wide variety of challenges. But the team-teaching approach provides the necessary flexibility to share talents, to assist in the teaching and learning process, and to enhance administrative skills and resources.

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Sociology: Coming to Life on Videocassettes

My wife, two adolescent sons, and I love to go to the movies together. Viewing and discussing movies are two of our most treasured activities as a family. Many of the students in my classes are also avid movie fans; teenagers and young adults comprise a majority of today's movie audiences.

Two of our greatest ongoing challenges as college instructors are making our classes as fascinating and as relevant to students' personal and academic lives as possible. In order to meet these challenges, I decided to show my students three- to eight-minute segments of recent full-length feature films on videocassette. Obviously, time limitations prevent me from showing entire one- to two-hour movies to the classes. The students seem delighted to occasionally watch a brief vignette from a favorite box-office attraction. When the students view a short passage from a film such as *Dances With Wolves*, they react positively. It is as if they were encountering old friends again and were reminiscing about cherished memories of the past. I show these short segments of recent movies in order to capture my students' attention, to generate enthusiasm, to illustrate sociological concepts, to provide visual reinforcement for cognitive and affective learning, and to encourage students to appreciate the cinema as an art form. It is my hope that sociology will come to life before their eyes.

In my Introduction to Sociology class, students observe a domineering father planning and controlling his adolescent son's life in the film *Dead Poets Society*. Can you imagine how an overwhelmingly adolescent audience of college students identifies with the young man, Neil, in this story and emotionally responds to his feelings of powerlessness? In the movie *Emerald Forest*, students meet a teenage boy who has been adopted by the inhabitants of a lost Amazon tribe and who experiences a rite of passage as he makes the painful transition from boyhood to manhood. As the students empathize with Tommy's ordeal, we as a class explore the purposes of these rituals for young people past and present. The sociological concept of *Gemeinschaft*—a small, closely-knit, well-integrated community—is beautifully illustrated in the movie *Witness*, as students watch Old Order Amish neighbors raise a barn in a day on a young couple's farm. The fantasy *Cocoon* demonstrates that older Americans can and do experience full, rich, and exciting lives. Viewing scenes from this film leads to a lively discussion of our society's collective negative images of the elderly. Stereotypes of the past

are challenged, while empathy for the aged is fostered. In the first minutes of the movie *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, students encounter a young Bushman from the Kalahari Desert of southern Africa who is totally perplexed by a Coke bottle which he discovers on the desert floor. Removed from the context of modern civilization, this strange "artifact" loses its original purpose and meaning and becomes a puzzling "gift from the gods." Who can forget the character of McMurphy, played so convincingly by Jack Nicholson, in the Academy Award-winning film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*? Scenes from this movie powerfully illustrate the "resocialization" of a patient in the "total institution" of a mental hospital. McMurphy's struggle against the hospital staff leads us to debate the moral and ethical dilemmas of reconstructing an individual's personality against his will.



Used skillfully, appropriately, and selectively, this technique provides the instructor with unlimited opportunities to bring the social sciences to life in the minds of students. The ultimate reward comes when students begin to share fresh new examples of sociological concepts from the world of the cinema. It is then that the instructor knows that students are beginning to see their old familiar world through the lens of the sociological perspective.

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