



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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Opportunity Papers

In order to avoid the negative connotation that tests carry for students, I developed the idea of Opportunity Papers. Students like the idea. I explain that we have no problems to solve in my Economics class—only situations to resolve. To me, the latter is a more positive approach to what I hope to accomplish.

The following handout is provided to students on the first day of class:



Succeeding in Economics

"The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor." —Vince Lombardi

This course is designed not so much to teach you economics as it is to teach you *about* economics, to help you understand how economics affects your life, to help you understand how the systems work, and to help you make financial decisions.

Conduct of the Class

Opportunity Papers (O.P.'s)—Tests we do not have. But you will regularly be given an Opportunity Paper, an opportunity to "show off your smarts," to learn what you have learned, to see what you need to learn.

Class Discussion—There are no right or wrong answers to questions that are asked during class discussions (and there will be many questions). We will have only some answers that better suit the questions than others. Join in the class discussions. Contribute to the success of the group. Ask questions; offer your opinions and ideas. If you do not understand, ask for more explanation. You have absolute freedom to disagree with the instructor, to question the instructor's answers to your questions.

Some Success Strategies

1. Take good notes in class—notes that are useful to you. For every definition, cite an example that clarifies the concept.
2. Read your book. Underline or highlight key words and phrases. (Do not overdo it.)
3. Know how to *use* the formulas and the definitions. Merely knowing them will not be enough.

4. Answer the questions at the end of each section. Answer the questions at the end of each chapter. This step is critical when preparing for an O.P.
5. If you find or have an economic matter pertaining to the material being discussed, or if you have an economic matter of interest to you and probably to the class, share it. We will discuss it.

Goal Setting

Put your name and course title and course number on the index card you received.

Now take a few minutes and think of the final letter grade (or score) you will commit yourself to achieving in this course. Complete the card, and turn it in face down. Only you and I will know what your commitment is. As you enter the world of business, you will have to set goals and help the business reach goals. This is a good place to begin.

Competition Between Classes

After each Opportunity Paper, I will write the results of other classes and the average for the classes, on a class-by-class basis, on the board. Your challenge will be to forge ahead, stay ahead, or catch up.

Remember: **You can succeed in Economics!**



When O.P.'s are returned to students, there is always a round of applause for those with the highest scores and for the student(s) who made the most significant increase in his/her last score.

As well, posting the scores of other classes creates competition that tends to bring each class closer together, and students work harder to achieve a common purpose.

More and more students are taking part in discussions, more are asking questions, more are feeling comfortable with the "opportunity," and more are joining me in making the entire experience a happy one. It is a pleasure to have students who can laugh and enjoy what they are doing. And, they are making real progress in their work!

H. L. Brockman, *Instructor, Economics*

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Annotated Syllabi: Coordination of an American Language Program

At Bergen Community College, a suburban campus with approximately 10,000 students, the largest growth area has been among its international population, which now approaches 20% of the student body, in a county where internationals constitute only 6.7% of the residents. The American Language Program at the college has been rising at the rate of 8-10% per year and now totals almost 500 students.

In this program, full-time students (day or evening) enroll for 15 credits in a pre-academic program—six hours of grammar and three hours each of speech, writing, and reading. Before registration, these students are pre-tested and placed in one of three levels. There is an exit examination required at the conclusion of Level III which students must pass before they are allowed to register for regular college courses.

Sometimes, the grammar, reading, and writing components of any one level are taught by one instructor, but more often there are two or even three.

The Goal

Our goal was to better coordinate the content and methodology of instruction in the American Language Program by eliminating the differentials—day/night student, full-time/part-time instructor, non-standardized teaching patterns.

The Plan of Action

The plan of action was to prepare an *annotated syllabus for each course* in the program, prepared by professors who had taught the courses several times before. Each syllabus is approximately 20 pages in length, and all are bound in one volume. They are loosely based on the text used for each course, facilitating any future changes in texts. Much of the work suggested by the syllabus is aimed at the acquisition of skills necessary for students to progress throughout the program and in the academic courses that will follow.

Each syllabus is divided into six segments:

1. A statement of the course objectives;
2. A description and analysis of the textbook;
3. An overall course outline, based on the sequence of specific competencies judged essential by members of the American Language Faculty;
4. Suggestions for use of individual segments of the text, clearly and precisely delineating exercises and

choices within a chapter;

5. Copies of additional exercises not found in the textbooks (For the writing classes, these include previous additional writing assignments that have been successfully employed. In reading classes there are additional texts, vocabulary practices, and exercises to enhance reading techniques. The grammatical segment includes exercises of a more creative sort than are usually provided in texts.);
6. Actual examinations used in previous courses.

All instructors are given a copy. It is especially helpful to adjunct faculty members teaching at the college for the first time. They are reminded that the syllabus is to serve as a collection of suggestions, not to be regarded as mandatory. But to simplify effort and reduce preparation time, the authors prepared all exercises in such a way that instructors need only to photocopy or mimeograph the pages and distribute them to students. No retyping is necessary.

Outcomes

Most faculty members have expressed satisfaction with the annotated syllabi. Adjunct instructors are especially pleased because, in addition to course materials, they receive an orientation to the goals and methodologies utilized in the program. Instruction is more standardized, making the movement from day to evening (or vice versa) more fluid. Plans are already underway to update the syllabi, with input from all instructors, full- and part-time, involved in the American Language Program.

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Suanna D. Roueche, Editor

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