

The Faculty Development Program

The Faculty Development Program supports faculty at Santa Clara University as teaching scholars. Programs and services promote two general goals:

- To enhance the professional development of Santa Clara University faculty.
- To explore how students learn and to support faculty in cultivating student learning.

Diane Jonte-Pace Associate Provost for Faculty Development

Phone: 408-554-4751
Email: djontepace@scu.edu
Office: Walsh Administration, 103

Mailing Address:
Faculty Development Program
Santa Clara University
500 El Camino Real
Santa Clara, CA 95053-0335

Kristin Love Faculty Development Assistant

Phone: 408-554-2746
Email: klove@scu.edu

Advisory Council

June Carbone Law
Jack Ling College of Arts and Sciences
Dale Larson Counseling Psychology
Dennis Moberg Management
Tim Urdan Psychology
Aleksandar Zecevic Electrical Engineering

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How Well Do Students Understand Our Lectures? Helping Santa Clara's Multi-lingual Students Learn

Cristin Boyd, Lecturer in the English Department

When was the last time you spoke with a non-native speaker with a heavy accent? Were you distracted by the accent? Did you have a difficult time capturing the main points of the conversation? Now, imagine yourself a student listening to a lecture in a language other than your own. This is the challenge a growing portion of SCU students face in our classes every day.

Our student population includes international students, exchange students, first generation college students, and a large population of California residents from multilingual backgrounds.

We know that multilingual students are highly capable, but they often benefit from extra support in their academic pursuits. Understanding a lecture can be particularly challenging for non-native speakers (NNS). It's easy to assume academic listening proficiency when, in casual conversation, multilingual students appear to be fluent native speakers. They ask the right questions, give the right answers, and have certainly mastered the use of "like." However, "academic listening" (in contrast to "conversational listening") has its own distinctive features (Richards, 1983).

Linguistic theory suggests at least five knowledge types required for comprehension (Andersen, 1983, 1985). These include pragmatics (social, world, and context), semantics (language meaning), syntax (sentence level construction), lexis (word meanings), and phonological (sounds and acoustics). If we add the need for real time processing, the speed of lecture delivery, the need to distinguish main ideas from minor points and jokes, and variable note-taking skills, we can better see the challenges faced by students from non-native English speaking backgrounds.

Major changes to lecture style and structure are unnecessary but minor changes can help increase NNS comprehension. Here are some suggestions:

Preview lecture content. Giving students advance notice about what to listen for can ensure better overall comprehension. To do this, write a short outline listing key concepts on the board.

Check off each item as it is addressed to keep students on track.

Provide a list of key terms in advance. Familiarizing themselves with key terms in advance can help NNS students process significant ideas in more depth.

Use repetition for emphasis. What may seem repetitious to faculty is helpful to students who are furiously writing notes about unfamiliar concepts and terms being delivered in a non-native tongue.

Slow down & interact more. We often lecture in overdrive. Speed of delivery is a common problem for non-native speakers (Flowerdew and Miller, 1996). Research suggests that interactive lectures are more comprehensible to non-native speakers (Flowerdew, 1994).

Use visual aids as much as possible. Overheads and notes on the board can assure that students capture key concepts and terms that might otherwise be lost. With PowerPoint short bullet points communicate better than long blocks of text.

Avoid idioms. Idioms ("brush up on," "red herring") are culturally based, linguistically complex, and baffling for non-native speakers. If you use them try to provide other examples and explanations as well.

Ask for evidence of comprehension. Asking "do you understand?" often results in an automatic "yes." Instead, ask students to restate a concept/idea in their own words. Asking students to summarize the main points of a lecture in 2-3 sentences at the end of class allows them to pull relevant pieces together and allows you to check overall comprehension.

Prime the pump. Asking students to freewrite for 2-3 minutes about assigned readings prior to a lecture activates existing cognitive schema (knowledge). Giving students this time right before a lecture helps them transition more easily into content specific language and concepts.

Be aware of your own expectations. Expecting students to offer

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Services and Programs

Teaching Support

- Confidential Classroom Visits
- Open Classrooms with the “Faculty Development Professor”
www.scu.edu/facultydevelopment/Open-Classrooms.cfm

Research Support: Grants

- Internal University Grants
- Faculty Student Research Assistant Program

Groups and Teams

- Mentoring teams or partnerships

- Faculty Study Group Grants

Resources

- Website: www.scu.edu/facultydevelopment
- Small resource library of books, videotapes, and articles

Programs

- Pedagogy in Perspective brown bag discussions
- Teaching Scholar Symposia
- Research Colloquia

What's In a Good Syllabus?

Diane Jonte-Pace, Associate Provost for Faculty Development

What kinds of syllabi do we create for our courses? Are we “listers?” Are we “scolders?” Are we creating “contracts” for our students? Or do our syllabi communicate something broader? In constructing a syllabus I ask myself five preliminary questions:

1. Who are my students?

What do they already know? What paradigms and assumptions might obstruct their understanding? How can I build on their current knowledge AND help them deconstruct their misconceptions? How can I build on their interests from the very first classes and first assignments?

2. What skills, knowledge, and values do I want my students to develop?

Can I structure the course around a single question or set of questions that my students will be able to answer in discussions, assignments and exams, in future studies, or in the world beyond the University?

3. What will help my students develop and demonstrate these skills, knowledge and values?

Can I provide multiple opportunities for students to learn, apply or analyze their new knowledge, skills and values? How can I create a variety of contexts for students to demonstrate what they've learned? How can I ensure deep learning?

4. Is the workload both challenging and reasonable (for me and for my students)?

Do I have time to follow up on assigned readings in class? Will I be able to provide meaningful feedback on assignments? Have I built in some flexibility or “catch up” time? Can I ask students to give each other feedback, serving as “peer reviewers”? How can I ensure the students will do the reading and come to class prepared

for discussions? Will the students be overwhelmed by the workload, or will they be challenged and engaged? Shall I allow revisions?

5. Do the readings and assignments reflect the goals and objectives of the course and the department?

Are the elements of the course aligned, integrated, and coherent? Do the students understand and appreciate the course goals and objectives? Are the departmental or program goals embedded in the course? Will the students understand how the course contributes to the major and/or to the broader curriculum?

After considering these questions I spend some time using a low-tech organizational schema involving a large calendar for the quarter and a set of small colorful post-it notes. It's a kind of “alignment matrix:” the color coded post-its represent readings, assignments, papers, and exams. This gives me a clear picture of the timing of the readings, assignments, and grading, the alignment of these elements with course goals and objectives, and the workload.

Another approach to syllabus design can be found in Michael Strada's essay “The Case for Sophisticated Course Syllabi” (2001).

In Strada's view, a thoughtful syllabus works in a variety of ways:

- *as a window revealing the philosophical disposition of the instructor;
- *as a cognitive map describing learning goals and objectives and showing why the intellectual terrain covered is important;
- *as a model conveying to students the belief that planning has pedagogical value;
- *as a contract binding the partners to-

gether;

*as a message that good teaching is important and is facilitated by a good syllabus;

*as a testimony that excellent teachers have high expectations for themselves as well as for their students;

*as a resource germane to the faculty evaluation process;

*as a substantive link between individual courses and the mission pursued by the wider curriculum.

We invite you to examine the content and design of syllabi posted on the Faculty Development website www.scu.edu/facultydevelopment/teaching. Contact Kristin Love (klove@scu.edu) to post a syllabus on the site.

References

Hernandez, Victor, et al., (2004). “Competency Assessment in Distributed Education,” Jesuit-Net, Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities.

Strada, Michael, (2001). “The Case for Sophisticated Course Syllabi.” In *To Improve the Academy: Resources for Faculty, Instructional, and Organizational Development*, Volume 19, Deborah Lieberman and Catherine Whelburg, eds., pp. 205-16, Bolton, MA: Anker Press. ■

In the Next Issue

The Fall 2006 Issue of *The Teaching Scholar* will feature reflections by SCU faculty on Carole Bland's book, *The Research Productive Department* (2005). If you would like to write a brief reflection on this book please contact Kristin Love, klove@scu.edu. We will be happy to send you a copy.

Schedule of Events Spring 2006

<p>Pedagogy in Perspective</p> <p>How Santa Clara Students Learn: Teaching Our Digital Natives</p> <p>Tuesday, April 11, 12:00-1:00pm</p> <p>Wiegand Room, A & S Building</p>	<p>Teaching Scholar Symposium</p> <p>How Assessments Can Help Students Learn</p> <p>Wednesday, April 26, 3:45-5:00pm</p> <p>Wiegand Room, A & S Building</p>	<p>Research Colloquium</p> <p>Integrating Research and Teaching</p> <p>Monday, May 8, 12:00-1:00pm</p> <p>Wiegand Room, A & S Building</p>
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Posters and Pedagogy: Promoting Collaborative Learning, Critical Thinking, and Oral Communication in an Interdisciplinary Course

Leilani Miller, Associate Professor of Biology, and Margaret McLean, Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies and Assistant Director, Markkula Center for Applied Ethics

Posters are not just for the walls of residence halls. They can serve an important function in the classroom, facilitating collaborative learning, critical thinking, and oral communication.

Biology 171 (Ethical Issues in Biotechnology) is a team-taught interdisciplinary course that explores the intersection between ethics and the biological sciences through the lens of biotechnology. We have used poster presentations, which students develop for a final project, as a vehicle to integrate science and ethics and to engage the broader SCU community in deep conversation about some of the issues raised in the course.

Poster presentations, although uncommon in the humanities, are routinely used in the sciences. At scientific conferences, poster sessions are times set aside for presenters to engage interested meeting participants in discussions of the information and analysis presented on the poster.

Presenters begin with a 2-4 minute overview of the poster, after which they engage the "viewer" in conversation. In our course, students worked in groups of three to create a 3 foot by 4 foot poster on the scientific and ethical dimensions of particular biotechnologies. The posters contain figures and text panels enabling the students to guide viewers through both scientific facts and ethical analyses.

Assigning posters for our course created some interesting challenges:

First, we had to develop an entirely new way of presenting posters, one that could present the science underlying a technology as well as the ethical analysis of issues raised by its development and/or application.

Second, we had to make sure the students explored both the science and the ethics of the issue deeply enough to allow a meaningful analysis.

Third, although most scientists produce and present their posters individually, we had to find a way to stimulate collaborative learning and discussion.

Fourth, we wanted to ensure that the work done by students in groups could be evaluated fairly.

Fifth, we wanted to provide opportunities for our students to develop strong oral communication skills in order to participate in effective poster presentations.

To address these challenges, we made the poster a major component (35%) of the grade. We created a series of milestones for each group – selecting the poster team, choosing a topic, submitting a list of references (with summaries), submitting a thesis statement, and creating the first panel of the poster. Students were required to find and incorporate at least one primary research paper

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Assessing Student Learning: Immediate Feedback on What Works in the Classroom

Diane Jonte-Pace, Associate Provost for Faculty Development

With a WASC visit approaching, I'm delighted to see faculty asking substantive questions about the assessment of student learning.

Atom Yee, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

A group of faculty are experimenting this year with a new approach to the assessment of student learning. Developed at the University of Wisconsin with the support of the National Science Foundation, the Student Assessment of Learning Gains (SALG) is an instrument that can easily be adapted to measure specific learning goals of courses, departments, or programs. The SALG is currently available to SCU faculty without charge. It provides quick feedback, not only on the effectiveness of structural and pedagogical elements courses, but also on student "learning gains" in knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Although the instrument can easily be adapted and modified, the basic SALG template asks questions about learning gains in relation to five issues:

- * course components (lectures, discussions, resources, assignments, etc.)
- * knowledge and understanding of course-specific content
- * skills and abilities
- * attitudes, values, or habits of mind
- * long-term learning, cognitive habits, or ongoing practices

Cynthia Baker, Associate Professor in Religious Studies, stated, after developing a SALG template for her introductory course, *Religions of the Book*, "I really like this format... Students are assessing how much they

learned in the course rather than "grading" how much they liked the professor or the material." Cynthia's SALG survey can be found below. To see online versions of the SALG for courses in other disciplines, the following URL can be pasted into a browser: www.wcer.wisc.edu/salgains/fac. Please note: because of security firewalls at Santa Clara and Wisconsin the URL is not effective as a hyperlink.

Closing the loop

At the end of the quarter teaching scholars who are reflective practitioners typically pause to reflect on what worked and what didn't in each class. The SALG provides an effective and efficient instrument to aid this kind of reflection. According to one participant, using the SALG immediately provided valuable

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Posters and Pedagogy, continued

from both the science and the ethics literature. The incorporation of primary resources provoked engagement and fostered a deep understanding of the material. At each stage, students received significant feedback and guidance. We engaged the entire class in a discussion of the posters. Each group presented its thesis and main arguments to the class and then fielded questions. Although a considerable number of class discussions had occurred by this time, this exercise gave the students their first formal practice in oral presentation, a skill that is crucial for both scientists and ethicists. In addition, the questions raised by the class helped them identify key issues and points of debate. And the

“viewers” were able to practice their own skills in ethical analysis on real issues in biotechnology. After the classroom discussion, students individually presented a 4 minute summary of the poster to us, followed by questions designed to gauge the depth of their understanding and ability to think and communicate critically. Finally, students presented their posters to the SCU community in a public poster session. This year, after the public poster session, a few of our students were invited to present the posters to the Trustees and to the Board of Regents, which they did quite successfully.

Group projects inevitably raise the issue of the fairness of group grades. Since the benefits of this project are so strong, we were committed to finding a solution. Our strategy

was to use a combination grade, 50% group work and 50% individual work. Each member of the group received the same grade for the actual poster, while individual achievement was graded on the basis of the individual oral presentation. Both the poster itself and the oral presentations were graded using rubrics that evaluate scientific and ethical understanding, in addition to visual elements, critical thinking, and oral communication skills.

The poster assignments motivate students with different learning styles at all levels of academic ability. We have found group posters to be unique and effective learning tools. Not only do they allow an interweaving of science and ethics, but they simultaneously teach collaborative learning, critical thinking, and oral communication. ■

Multi-lingual, continued

opinions in large groups is a very western expectation. Instead, offer students opportunities to share ideas in less public ways, such as through comments on index cards, in online discussions, in small groups, or in pairs.

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problems and strategies in second language lecture comprehension. *RELC Journal*, 23 (2), 60-80.

Flowerdew, J. (1994). Research of relevance to second language lecture comprehension—An overview. In J. Flowerdew (Ed.), *Academic Listening* (pp. 7-29). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J.C., (1983). Listening Comprehension: Approach, design, procedure. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17(2), 219-39.

Cristin A. Boyd invites your comments and inquiries about working with Santa Clara’s linguistically diverse students.
cboyd@scu.edu ■

Assessing, continued

feedback: “I realized that my course had not addressed one of my department’s central learning goals. I thought I was communicating something that wasn’t getting through. I was able to revise my syllabus in time for my Spring quarter classes.”

An Invitation

Although the SALG was developed as an online survey, it can also be administered in class as a pencil and paper instrument. We invite faculty to join us in experimenting with this

instrument for the assessment of student learning. Please contact Diane Jonte-Pace for information or assistance with online or paper versions of the SALG. And please help us assess the assessment: give us feedback on whether the SALG is enhancing student learning in your classroom. ■

STUDENT ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING GAINS
SCTR. 19 #20609 (section 1) and #21012 (section 2)
Spring '06
Prof. Cynthia Baker

1. How much did each of the following assist you in learning the material? (LEARNING)
1. not at all 2. just a little 3. somewhat 4. a lot 5. a great deal

	1	2	3	4	5
Class lectures					
Discussions (small and whole group)					
Working with scriptural texts in class					
Required essay (on Abraham)					
Graded worksheets (on the three traditions)					
Preparing for group presentation					

2. How much progress did you make toward understanding each of these topics? (UNDERSTANDING)
1. not at all 2. just a little 3. somewhat 4. a lot 5. a great deal

	1	2	3	4	5
Comparisons, contrasts, and relationships among the four religious traditions and their sacred texts					
The early historical development of each tradition and its sacred texts					
How sacred texts are read, taught, interpreted, and handled in each of the living traditions					

3. How much progress did you make toward mastering each of these skills? (SKILLS)
1. not at all 2. just a little 3. somewhat 4. a lot 5. a great deal

	1	2	3	4	5
Stating ideas clearly in discussions and presentations					
Writing clearly argued papers or exam answers using supportive evidence					
Comparing, analyzing, and evaluating ideas					
Finding, evaluating and using resources in the library, on the internet, and in the local community					

4. How much progress did you make toward developing each of these habits of mind? (HABITS OF MIND)
1. not at all 2. just a little 3. somewhat 4. a lot 5. a great deal

	1	2	3	4	5
Reflecting ethically about religious texts and their moral/political implications					
Thinking deeply about a variety of religious claims and ways of living in the world					
Understanding what religious reveal about human societies: their convictions, aspirations, and traditions					

5. What knowledge, skills, and habits of mind from this class will you carry with you into other classes and aspects of your life? Answer this question in a few sentences. You may use the back of this paper.