



AT CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

The Joy Shechtman Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL) at Connecticut College promotes engaged and effective teaching that cultivates significant student learning. The CTL fosters a campus culture that values a diversity of learning, teaching and disciplinary styles, welcomes honest discussion of teaching and learning, and encourages the scholarship of teaching and learning.

To achieve its mission, the CTL organizes programming that facilitates the exchange of ideas about teaching and learning; offers resources and support for new faculty, including programs that promote their smooth transition into the College community and their success in the areas of teaching, scholarship and service; creates both formal and informal sources of support for faculty teaching at all stages of their careers; and engages in efforts to improve teaching and learning at small liberal arts colleges on the regional and national level.



CONNECTICUT
COLLEGE

TEACHING & LEARNING AT CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

The Joy Shechtman Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2010

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1



Sunil Bhatia, Simon Feldman and Tom Satran at an April 30 Talking Teaching discussion, "The Liberal Classroom?"

From the DIRECTOR

DEAR COLLEAGUES,

I am very pleased to present the inaugural issue of the CTL Newsletter. While the CTL has been around in one form or another for over a dozen years, only recently have we decided to publish a newsletter, in large part because we have concentrated our efforts and resources on creating face-to-face opportunities for faculty to make their teaching practices public and to think about their teaching intentionally. Now that the CTL is established and well into its second decade, we are trying out new ideas and programming.

This newsletter itself is part of a newly undertaken CTL initiative focused on

the research of teaching and learning. There are two central goals for this research initiative: helping our faculty become more familiar with the large body of literature on teaching and learning (much of which is collected in the CTL's library) and learning more about the student learning and faculty teaching that takes place here on our campus.

In pursuit of the first goal, a large part of this newsletter is devoted to a section called "From the CTL Bookshelves," which provides reviews of key books that address teaching and learning — reviews that are written by our colleagues across the disciplines.

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DEAR COLLEAGUES

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Leah Lowe, the editor of this newsletter, is looking for faculty to review books for future issues; a list of books available for review appears on page 8. If you know of a book on teaching and learning that you would like to review that isn't on our list, let us know.

Regarding the second goal, the CTL has recently undertaken research projects aimed to gather information about the teaching and learning that takes place in our own classrooms. The first was a survey of this year's freshman class, administered through Freshman Seminars, that gathered information about our students' attitudes toward the open discussion of sensitive issues and the implications of those attitudes on critical thinking. The results of this research will be presented on Tuesday, May 25, as part of this year's Camp Teach & Learn (see box on right for an overview of the program). In addition, last fall the CTL piloted an optional student feedback form among a group of faculty volunteers that is designed to give faculty insight into their students' experience of the intellectual challenge and academic rigor within that specific course. This information allows faculty to better place their own teaching within our preliminary findings about academic challenge from the Wabash National Study.

Our growth in programming is in part possible because of a growth in faculty involvement in leading the center. In spring 2009, after a call for applicants, the CTL Advisory Board,

in consultation with the dean of the faculty, chose Abby Van Slyck and Leah Lowe to serve as the new CTL Faculty Fellows. Abby and Leah joined Gene Gallagher, the Gibney Faculty Fellow, as part of the center's leadership team. In her capacity as faculty fellow, Abby serves as a resource and mentor to the Class of '57 Teaching Seminar for Incoming Faculty, in addition to coordinating the CTL's new Open Classrooms Project, which encourages faculty to visit each other's classrooms in order to learn about one another's teaching (see page 10). This year Leah has served as a faculty fellow for the new Mellon Visiting Faculty Teaching Seminar, in addition to working on an initiative on the literature of teaching and learning, a large part of which is producing and editing this newsletter.

Another key leader within the CTL has been MaryAnne Borrelli, who has done a wonderful job coordinating the CTL's immensely successful "Talking Teaching" series of pedagogical discussions. I am happy to report that MaryAnne's excellent and detailed notes from this year's Talking Teaching series are now available on the CTL website (<http://CTL.conncoll.edu>). A sample of these notes, from last semester's well-attended discussion of "microaggressions" in the classroom, is included on page 9 of this newsletter.

Finally, it is important to note that much of our CTL programming is made possible by the ongoing support of Joy Shechtman Mankoff, the Gibney Trust, the Class of '57 and a current grant from the Mellon Foundation. Without these donors' generosity, as well as the dedicated work of the faculty involved in helping lead the CTL, teaching as a critical practice would not be so visibly central to our lives here at Connecticut College. Thanks to all of the people whose hard work and participation make the CTL possible; I am grateful to be a part of this important work.

Sincerely,
Michael

CTL DIRECTOR: MICHAEL REDER

GIBNEY FACULTY FELLOW: GENE GALLAGHER

FACULTY FELLOWS: ABBY VAN SLYCK, LEAH LOWE

TALKING TEACHING COORDINATOR: MARYANNE BORRELLI

CTL ADVISORY BOARD: BRIDGET BAIRD, SUNIL BHATIA,

MARYANNE BORRELLI, GENE GALLAGHER, MARTHA

GROSSEL, LEAH LOWE, DENISE PELLETIER, MICHAEL

REDER, ABBY VAN SLYCK, STUART VYSE

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT: JOYCE MCDANIEL

Come to Camp Teach & Learn, May 25-27!

Enjoy discussion and meals with faculty colleagues, learn about teaching, and win fabulous prizes!

Sessions include:

- "Connecticut College Students' Attitudes about Discussion: Implications for Critical Thinking and Diversity" with special guest Carol Trosset, institutional researcher at Hampshire College
- "The Balancing Act: Gendered Perspectives on Faculty Roles and Work Lives" with guest facilitator Carol Hoffman, associate provost and director of Work-Life at Columbia University
- Book groups on Rebecca D. Cox's "The College Fear Factor: How Students and Professors Misunderstand One Another" and Jaron Lanier's "You Are Not A Gadget: A Manifesto"
- ...and other interesting discussions and presentations such as "Visual Literacy 101" and "The Neuropsychology of Learning"

For more information contact Michael Reder, x2122 or reder@conncoll.edu.



From the CTL BOOKSHELVES

The College Fear Factor: How Students and Professors Misunderstand One Another

Rebecca D. Cox. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009
198 pp. ISBN 978-0-674-03548-5.
\$24.95 (Cloth)

Although Cox's book is based on her ethnographic study of students in community college composition courses, there is something in it for anyone who teaches undergraduates.

Cox's central theme is what she calls a "disconnect" between professors' expectations and students' performance. Implicit in Cox's exposition of the gap between teachers' and students' understandings of what they are trying to accomplish in college is an urgent plea for teachers to devote themselves to figuring out their students' conceptions "of college, of college professors, and of the role of a college student" (157-8) in order to equalize opportunities to learn and empower students to succeed.

Cox is particularly attentive to the worries and preconceptions of first-generation college students who have not been socialized into a set of expectations about what "college" will entail. Cox finds that students who perceive their teachers as "coming down to their level" and being legitimately interested in their success are able to overcome many of their crippling fears about doing college-level work.

Cox also finds that what students want to learn is not well aligned with what professors want to teach them. She emphasizes both the eminently practical interests of many college students who simply want to acquire the knowledge and skills that promise to put them on a firmer economic footing and their consequent "narrowly defined conceptions of knowledge and learning" (67). Their extensive experience in public high school with standardized texts orient them towards

seeking from their teachers the specific factual knowledge that will enable them to "make the grade" on tests. That orientation further leads them to praise teachers who present lectures packed with easily digestible information and

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to view with suspicion any other form of pedagogy, such as class discussions and collaborative projects, as being off the point and frivolous.

Cox roots the implicit expectation that teachers will "stand and deliver" in the late 19th-century assimilation of American higher education to the paradigm of the German research university. As she sees it, that model endorses a conception of "teaching as telling" and implicitly devalues alternative pedagogical practices. Cox shows clearly how students' implicit endorsement of the model of "teaching as telling" works against their developing to their full capacities to think clearly, reason in a sustained and disciplined fashion, and identify and analyze complex problems. — *Eugene V. Gallagher*

Teaching First-Year College Students

Bette LaSere Erickson, Calvin B. Peters and Diane Weltner Strommer. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006

284 pp. ISBN 978-0-7879-6439-9.
\$40 (paper)

This revised and expanded version of "Teaching College Freshmen" (1991) is based on the premise that teaching first-year students is a special case. For the most part, first-year students do not know what is expected of them in college-level work nor are they used to practicing higher-order thinking — whether that involves recognizing concepts they have memorized or applying those concepts to new situations. In short, they need to be taught both the course content and how to be college students.

This book is aimed primarily at teachers, although administrators interested in the first-year experience would find it useful. The first part of the book, "Understanding First-Year Students," offers three chapters that summarize research on the difficulties first-year students experience in college, the process of intellectual development during the college years and learning styles. The second part — and my favorite — is comprised of nine chapters on "Effective Instruction for First-Year Students." These chapters cover a wide range of topics, from designing the course and writing the syllabus to evaluation and grading, from ideas for improving what happens in the classroom to suggestions for encouraging students to make better use of their efforts outside the classroom. The third part, "Opportunities and Challenges in First-Year Instruction," includes four chapters that touch on institutional factors and context: creating inclusion, teaching large classes, advising and first-year seminars, and strengthening commitment to first-year instruction.

What I particularly liked about the book was how much I benefitted from the book in a very short time. I had volunteered to review this book because I would like to improve student learning

in a 100-level survey course that I have been teaching for years. Naturally, I was in a hurry, so I began by scanning the introduction, which provided two useful pieces of information. The first was a succinct statement of the book's three major themes:

1) "the need to meet first-year students where they are, with reasonable rigor and appropriate support";

2) "the importance of variety — in approaches, examples, presentation style, assignments, evaluation, and nearly everything we do as instructors"; and

3) the need to engage our students.

The second useful piece of information was the authors' acknowledgement that the book did not have to be read cover-to-cover, but that it could be "sampled profitably." That certainly turned out to be the case for me. Within 10 minutes of dipping into a chapter on teaching large classes, I had developed a new appreciation of the importance of getting to class early, picked up three new ideas for getting students to come to office hours, and experienced an epiphany about how I might get students to grapple with the textbook in productive ways. (For the last, the trigger was a couple of paragraphs on base groups — small groups that work together throughout the semester — and using a few minutes of class time to have the groups summarize the reading.) I had similar experiences in chapters on presenting and explaining (which suggests why instructors should and how they might break up the non-stop 50-minute lecture) and on preparing a syllabus and meeting the first class (including excellent tips on icebreakers that won't become monotonous in a large class). I was so engrossed in considering the range of concrete suggestions — rejecting some, adopting others to my subject matter and teaching persona — that two hours had passed and the woodstove burned out before I looked up.

The book includes useful ideas for faculty teaching in any area of the curriculum. Chapters on the first day of class, creating involvement in the classroom, evaluation and grading would apply to any first-year class at

Connecticut College. Even the ideas in the chapter on large classes (by which the authors mean classes of between 100 and 500) are helpful, once they have been adjusted to our institutional context.

In short, this is an accessible, interesting book chock-a-block with ideas that you could apply to your classes this semester. Although I admire many of the books in the CTL library, this is one that I feel compelled to buy for myself. — *Abby Van Slyck*

The Social Worlds of Higher Education: Handbook for Teaching in a New Century

Bernice A. Pescosolido and Ronald Aminzade, eds. Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, 1999. 672 pp. CD included. ISBN 978-0-761-98613-3. \$150 (Cloth)

Power and authority — their workings and guidance concerning their use — are the focus of "The Social Worlds of Higher Education." With 55 chapters addressing collegiate and university education through personal, classroom and institutional contexts, it is a volume to be consulted rather than read. For the most part the chapters are edited

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to find arguments
with which they are in
agreement and still others
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reprints from newspapers, journals and books by authors representing diverse disciplines, generations and educational philosophies. The authors and editors share an understanding of education as based upon and expressed through human relationships, and this perception provides unity and cohesion to the book.

"The Social Worlds of Higher Education" is organized into three sections. The first, "Surveying the Social Landscape of Higher Education at the End of the 20th Century: Pressures From the Outside," is comparatively brief. It provides a generalized overview of issues such as students' pre-college education, the financial burdens of higher education, assessment, and research expectations for faculty. Because the book predates the conservative educational reforms of the George W. Bush administration (such as No Child Left Behind) and the financial shifts caused by two recessions in the past decade, this section is the most dated. Even so, it is helpful, in a broader sense, for those new to institutional analyses of higher education.

The second section, "Mapping Issues in the Social Worlds of Higher Education: Arguments from the Inside," comprises the greater part of the volume. Among the trends and policy issues addressed are debates regarding learning communities, critical thinking, grade inflation, teaching evaluations, class and culture wars, corporate ties, tenure, faculty-student sexual relationships, diversity in faculty hires and student enrollments, and educational career trends. These chapters create a "glass half empty, glass half full" sensation for the reader. On the one hand, the relevance and usefulness of articles at least 10 years old sends a disheartening message about the pace and extent of change in higher education. On the other hand, the articles are well written, forcefully argued statements that take thoughtful positions on continuing controversies. A reader is almost certain to find arguments with which they are in agreement and still others with which they disagree, making for a stimulating reading experience.

"Charting the Landscape of Higher Education in the 21st Century," the third and final section of the book, provides an overview of ongoing innovations in educational practices. Examining the likely effects of reform movements (such as teaching and learning), faculty career demographics (including the research-teaching

tension) and financial pressures (from parents and legislatures), these articles give content to the “it depends” — the invariable response to questions about the future of education in United States colleges and universities.

As this overview indicates, “The Social Worlds of Higher Education” fulfills its promise to serve as a “Handbook for Teaching in a New Century.” Ten years into the “new century,” it is still relevant, sometimes discouragingly so. Still, the continuing usefulness of this book may point to the validity of disagreement in the search for better methods of communication, better means of generating knowledge, better relationships for revealing fundamental principles of teaching and learning. Ultimately, as the editors demonstrate, education does depend ... on the disciplinary expertise and self-awareness of those engaged in constructing institutions for teaching and for learning. — *MaryAnne Borrelli*

Engaging Ideas: The Professor’s Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom

John C. Bean. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001
304 pp. ISBN: 978-0-7879-0203-2.
\$40 (Paper)

John Bean describes “Engaging Ideas” as an integrative handbook, located at the intersection of writing-across-the-curriculum, critical-thinking, and active-learning movements in higher education. Sensitive to the diverse needs of different disciplines, course levels and class sizes, and well aware of the limitations posed by faculty time constraints and class periods, Bean succeeds in providing a pragmatic and creative guide to developing courses that feature problem-solving. This volume is therefore useful for those with more and less experience in the classroom, who are interested in engaging more deeply in teaching-and-learning exchanges with both students and colleagues.

“Engaging Ideas” is organized, both conceptually and editorially, for easy

access. The 15 chapters are grouped into four larger sections — educational theory and pedagogical principles; designing problem-based writing assignments; active learning, writing and critical thinking in course and class design; and marking and grading. Individual chapters are devoted to more specific practices (e.g., small group

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work, interactive lectures, simulations and debates, essay exams, and so on). Chapters consider debates about various practices (in what ways are these specific pedagogical activities rigorous? how are they best employed to enhance analytic skills and substantive expertise?) and offer class outlines that range from the introductory to the advanced. The chapter on small group work, for example, responds directly to charges that this approach to teaching and learning reflects professorial laziness, encourages student conformity and rewards glibness rather than insight. A class outline sets out the different stages in small group work, with a “how-to” presentation supplemented by references to educational philosophy. Concrete tasks and writing assignments are detailed. Accurate and pointed subtitles allow a reader to concentrate on the topics and issues that are of greatest interest.

Bean’s contribution to the literature of teaching and learning lies in his own skill as a writer and analyst

of educational innovations. While methods outlined in “Engaging Ideas” are familiar to every student and teacher, less well known are the thoughtful and precise explanations of why one or another method is controversial, useful or engaging. In addition to giving creative examples of teaching practices, Bean models how to explain the intellectual value of these endeavors. His ideas and ideals will win support from some, opposition from others, but everyone will have a stronger and more informed understanding of their judgments.

A secondary use of “Engaging Ideas,” then, is in developing a teaching statement. Bean provides both factual information and models for presentation that are critical to a persuasive presentation of principles and practices in course design and execution. Bean’s gift for articulating what many faculty members comprehend intuitively is invaluable, especially since his words will stimulate more creativity as we reflect on our actions as teachers, and greater originality as we write about our experiences in teaching. In all of these ways, Bean’s integration of writing, critical thinking and active learning are as significant for the professor as for the student.

If you are new to teaching, “Engaging Ideas” will help calm the confusion. If you have been teaching for a while, this book will suggest new possibilities. If your classes are solid but dull, this book offers substantively rich innovations. And if you feel at odds with recent innovations in teaching and learning, this book will respect your disagreement while working to gain your support. In sum, it is a thoughtful and useful book, well worth a read. — *MaryAnne Borrelli*

Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice

Maryellen Weimer. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002
288 pp. ISBN 978-0-7879-5646-2. \$38 (Cloth)

Maryellen Weimer’s “Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to

Practice” advocates for pedagogy that empowers students to take responsibility for their learning and course design that requires students to exercise that responsibility. Frustrated with students more concerned with the external reward of excelling in a class than internally mastering its material, Weimer takes aim at what she might call “teacher-centered learning” in which an expert professor relays information to a passive classroom infantilized by rules forbidding absences, late assignments, gum chewing and baseball caps. As a point of contrast, she describes an introductory communications course that she taught. During the course of the semester, each student was required to give one speech but, depending on the final grade he or she desired, could choose all of the other assignments for the course from a long list of possibilities that included an option of taking exams as a member of a collaborative study group that would work together on formulating answers. While some strictures were enforced to keep the class moving forward — each assignment a student opted to complete, for instance, had a due date after which the assignment would not be accepted — students were free to make many more choices regarding their work in the class than they were allowed ordinarily. Weimer argues that through making choices and assuming responsibility for them, students develop learning skills that enable them to engage with a course’s material in a deep, sustained and meaningful way and prepare them to become lifelong learners.

Throughout the book, Weimer draws heavily on the literature of teaching and learning and makes a strong case for changing the way we think about teaching by emphasizing the learning process and student involvement rather than the mastery of course content. Weimer’s interest in encouraging active and accountable learners spans the entirety of a course’s design — she maintains that policies governing the classroom climate, for instance, are more effective when created with students by asking them to reflect on situations they find most

conducive to learning rather than being proscribed by the professor. And grades, with which Weimer’s students are as concerned as mine, become another source of self-reflective learning as she asks students to analyze their performance on exams by looking up the correct answers to questions they missed and correlating them to

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absences in class and lapses in reading.

While I found “Learner-Centered Teaching” provocative and, in many ways, convincing, I confess to feeling challenged by some of Weimer’s suggestions and the ramifications of adopting them. As I was reading, I found myself thinking that it would take a great deal of work to redesign a course to comply with the book’s principles. Weimer herself is forthright about the fact that learner-centered pedagogy is labor intensive in comparison to more conventional styles of pedagogy. Setting up the kinds of assignments and activities she describes requires a good deal of class time and forces the professor to become more selective about the content covered in a course. She acknowledges that a shift to learner-centered pedagogy demands that the professor design and plan assignments very carefully. The professor must also be willing to give up some of his or her power in the classroom to allow students greater control of their learning. Weimer discusses these pedagogical challenges clearly, noting difficulties and offering

practical suggestions for implementing learner-centered activities. The book’s appendices were particularly useful in this regard. They include the syllabus for Weimer’s introductory communications class, a variety of handouts on developing learning skills that could be shared with students, and annotated bibliographies on various aspects of pedagogy and learning. Through looking at these materials, I found myself thinking of ways in which I could experiment with learner-centered teaching through specific assignments without taking the entire course back to the drawing board.

I found “Learner-Centered Teaching” most valuable for the ways in which it made me think about how I could get students to assume responsibility for their progress in a course and I would recommend it to others concerned with this problem. The book is filled with creative ideas for shifting the responsibility for learning from professor to students. While its philosophical orientation might be interesting to those teaching large classes, its practical suggestions seem more applicable to smaller classes and seminars. — *Leah Lowe*

Transformations: Approaches to College Science Teaching

Deborah Allen and Kimberly Tanner.
W.H. Freeman Scientific Teaching, 2009
ISBN: 978-1-429-25335-2. \$20.95 (Cloth).

In this collection of essays, the authors “try to connect ... to the struggles of our science faculty colleagues as they strive to enact transformative teaching in their classrooms.” The essays are thoroughly researched, well written, and cover important topics in education.

What I found most helpful about this book is that it is specific to science teaching. The essays consider that most introductory science classes have very large “lecture” components (here at Connecticut College about 100 students) and smaller “laboratory” sections. I also found the citations of primary education literature a great

source of information that easily allows the reader to further investigate topics and access resources. The essays are topical, focused, and provide tools that apply directly to the classroom. Examples are scientific (mostly biological) in nature.

This book addresses a wide variety of teaching issues. Topics covered include active learning strategies for large classrooms, strategies to get students talking, analysis of questions using Bloom's Taxonomy, use of (and examples of) problem based learning, assessment, and ways of engaging all students.

This book is geared toward undergraduate science professors. Most science professors are tempted to teach class in the way they were taught — that is, to lecture for 50 minutes on content and then test knowledge and comprehension. The writers of this book recognize the challenges of infusing active learning into large introductory courses and address both the data that indicate the importance of active learning and common concerns of professors who are challenged by this approach. It provides many simple, straightforward strategies that can help professors begin to create active learning classrooms.

The section I found most interesting was the section on engaging students. These essays provide evidence from the literature that demonstrates that we should foster active classrooms and then provides simple strategies to begin transforming lecture halls into exciting communities of learners. For example, a study by Rowe and colleagues found that most teachers waited an average of only 1.5 seconds for a student response to their question (interestingly, more time for high-achieving students and less time for low-achieving students). When instructors deliberately waited 3-5 seconds after asking a question, students gave longer, more complex answers and the number of students who answered "I don't know" decreased (20). The authors then give simple strategies to help professors overcome the silence that is associated with waiting (one-minute papers and other techniques). Another favorite: A study

by Smith et al., 2009, found "that peer discussion enhances understanding, even when none of the students in a

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discussion group initially knows the correct answer" (30). The authors go on to discuss perceived barriers to promoting student-talk and give specific advice to overcome these barriers (Think-Pair-Share technique, for one).

I would recommend this book to all college professors, but especially to those teaching in the sciences who are tempted to lecture to large introductory classes. The book provides simple strategies to begin to incorporate active learning into your classroom. For those who already foster active learning, the writings provide a resource complete with data, references and strategies to encourage you to continue your efforts and to try new approaches. — *Martha Grossel*

Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide

Henry Jenkins. New York: NYU Press, 2008
353 pp. ISBN 978-0814742955. \$18.95 (Paper)

This book was first published in 2006 and gives a wonderful introduction to the topic of "new media." Jenkins (from the MIT Media Lab) is one of the big gurus of this movement and he writes a

very perceptive book. The book itself is a classic in the field of media studies. It does not address questions of "how to teach," but if you're looking for a book that considers new and old media and how and where they meet, this is an excellent one. In other words, it's going to give professors an appreciation for the technological world that our students (and we) live in and how it's changing.

Jenkins defines "convergence culture" as sites in which old and new media come together and argues that there has been a cultural shift in the way spectators view and participate in these media. He says the book is about the relationships between three concepts: media convergence, participatory culture and collective intelligence.

Each chapter concentrates on a specific example of convergence culture that Jenkins then analyzes to illustrate his points. Chapters include discussion of:

- The TV show *Survivor* and the "spoilers" who try to figure out what will happen in later episodes. For Jenkins, *Survivor* illustrates questions about "collective intelligence" and what kinds of knowledge lend themselves to it.
- The TV show *American Idol* and "affective economics." This chapter raises questions about ethics, advertising and online communication affecting the outcome of TV shows. In it, Jenkins also talks about network versus cable TV.
- *The Matrix* and its sequels, including games. The audience had to see the first movie and play games in order to understand the sequels fully. This kind of phenomenon changes the nature of the audience and of its interaction with the concepts. Jenkins calls it "transmedia storytelling."
- The *Star Wars* phenomenon in the years following the release of the first movie and an exploration of its relationship to its fan base. In relation to *Star Wars* fan culture, Jenkins considers creativity (fans appropriated many of the concepts and then added their

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own interpretation and material), copyright and control issues.

- The *Harry Potter* books and movies. Jenkins discusses two battles: the efforts of a teenage girl to start a website where kids could write additional creative material (she was sued by Warner Bros., who wanted to protect their investment) and the many suits brought the members of the religious right to prohibit reading and discussion of the book.
- Politics and the 2004 election: Jenkins raises questions concerning media coverage on such issues as the nature of truth, the role of bloggers in elections, how informed the public is, and the public's relationship to news.
- In the afterword, Jenkins discusses YouTube and briefly addresses the 2008 election.

The paperback edition was released in 2008 and while it has a bit of an afterword, it doesn't really address media changes since 2006, such as texting and the combination of phone and computer functions in a single cell phone; thus it's not completely up to date. Another issue that Jenkins barely addresses is the music industry and the ways people acquire music (perhaps because these are not as readily "convergent"). But all things considered, "Convergence Culture" is a good read and a classic in its field. — *Bridget Baird*

CTL BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

The CTL library is filled with books that we would like to review in future editions of the newsletter. Below are

some titles. If you are interested in reviewing one of these books or another that you've found, please contact Leah Lowe at mllow@conncoll.edu.

Angelo, Thomas A. and K. Patricia Cross. "Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

Bligh, Donald A. "What's the Use of Lectures?" San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

Blumberg, Phyllis. "Developing Learner-Centered Teaching, A Practical Guide for Faculty." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Brookfield, Stephen D. and Stephen Preskill. "Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

Brookfield, Stephen D. "The Skillful Teacher, Second Edition." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006.

Cross, K. Patricia and Mimi Harris Steadman. "Classroom Research: Implementing the Scholarship of Teaching." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996.

Davis, Barbara Gross. "Tools for Teaching, Second Edition." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Diamond, Robert M. "Designing & Assessing Courses and Curricula, A Practical Guide." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Gordon, Virginia N., Wedley R. Habley, Thomas J. Grites and Associates. "Academic Advising, A Comprehensive Handbook, Second Edition." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008.

McKeachie, Wilbert J. and Mariella Svinicki. "McKeachie's Teaching Tips Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers, 11th and 12th Editions." Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

Nilson, Linda B. "Teaching at Its Best, Second Edition." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

Nilson, Linda B. "The Graphic Syllabus and the Outcomes Map, Communicating Your Course." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007.

O'Brien, Judith Grunert, Barbara J. Millis and Margaret W. Cohen. "The Course Syllabus, Second Edition." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008.

Stevens, Dannelle D. and Antonia J. Levi. "Introduction to Rubrics." Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, Inc., 2005.

Suskie, Linda. "Assessing Student Learning." (Second Edition) San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Upcraft, M. Lee, John N. Gardner, Betsy O. Barefoot, & Associates. "Challenging & Supporting the First-Year Student." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005.

Walvoord, Barbara E. "Assessment Clear and Simple." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

Walvoord, Barbara E. and Virginia Johnson Anderson. "Effective Grading, a Tool for Learning and Assessment." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Weimer, Maryellen. "Enhancing Scholarly Work on Teaching & Learning Professional Literature That Makes a Difference." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006.

Have you published an article on your teaching? Are you on the editorial board of a journal in your field that addresses teaching and learning? Do you subscribe to a journal in your discipline that is concerned primarily with pedagogy? If so, let Michael Reder (redere@conncoll.edu, x2122) or Leah Lowe (leah.lowe@conncoll.edu, x2636) know. The CTL is trying to put together a list of discipline-specific pedagogical resources as well as a list of faculty members who are publishing on their teaching.

Talking Teaching Notes: MICROAGGRESSIONS

THE JOY SHECHTMAN MANKOFF CENTER for Teaching & Learning is placing notes from its popular Talking Teaching series online. Below are notes from “When Intent is Irrelevant: ‘Microaggressions’ in the Classroom,” held on Nov. 6, 2009, with featured discussants Carol Akai, David Canton, Charles Cocores, Ann Sloan Devlin, Cherise Harris, Julia Kushigian, Leah Lowe, Jefferson Singer and Derek Turner. This Talking Teaching event was co-sponsored by the Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity. To see notes from other Talking Teaching sessions, go to <http://ctl.conncoll.edu/programs.html#talking>.



Shubhna Sharma, Carol Akai, Abby Van Slyck, John Gordon and Simon Hay

As a teacher, how do you respond to a student who is suffering in your classroom, especially when there is no intent to cause pain?

“How long have you been here?” “You are so articulate.” “Your comments are so forceful.” These and other statements may be intended as expressions of friendly curiosity or support, but they can be heard as prejudiced challenges. How can you respond to these ambiguities in your classroom? How can you counter an unwitting attack and support both the misguided and the injured student? How can we facilitate teaching and learning about controversial topics without being too lax or too proscriptive?

Professor Devlin provided an overview of psychological research regarding racism. A summary of points raised throughout the subsequent conversation follows:

RESPONDING TO MICROAGGRESSIONS:

The enemy is the surprise that you feel at the remark. You need to keep thinking about responses that could be made so that you are able to provide an answer that does not put all students

at a disadvantage. One opportunity for practice is the syllabus workshop, which provides feedback from colleagues on your choice of topics, readings and assignments. These conversations help faculty to notice patterns of inclusion and exclusion, raising consciousness as teachers.

In responding to a student or speaker who has said something that constitutes a microaggression, the impact of your statement will reach far beyond the particular individual who is speaking. Speak so that you don't alienate others, but do speak. Think, also, about how to ask the students, “What does this mean to you?”

Consider exercises of power and ways of revealing institutional racism. Do the comparative work regarding gender, race and other aspects of identity, considering the similarities of the microaggressions — but don't neglect the differences. Take the time to work the distinctions between the institution and the individual, and also the relationships.

CONCEPTS AND KNOWLEDGE:

To be racist, a person needs to have the

power to discriminate, to subjugate, to disenfranchise. Not all people are racist, though all may be racially prejudiced. Power, though, needs to be considered on a grand structural scale. It is not “just” about character; it is about being embedded in a structure. Beware conflating the individual and the societal.

Your position in the power hierarchy matters. If you are at the upper levels, then you have the privilege of not noticing.

TEACHING AND LEARNING, RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRIORITIES:

Comfort in the classroom is often seen as requisite to learning, but then when it is altered ... students don't speak. How do you create a community in which comfort is not the most important practice? Some disequilibrium is required in order to learn — people need to be more at the edge of their comfort zone. This is strongly related to recognizing that systems are racialized. Beware conflating this with racism, though

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Luis Gonzalez, Marty Allen, Anne Bernhard and Don Peppard

OPEN CLASSROOMS PROGRAM

ONE OF THE MOTIVATING PHILOSOPHIES

of the Joy Shechtman Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning is that teaching — like scholarship — should be a public activity. Here's how we think about it: As scholars and artists, faculty members are eager to share the fruits of our research and artistic production with our colleagues, whether in print, at conferences or in performances, knowing that their considered responses will help us refine our work. So it is with teaching. Or at least it can be, if we can become accustomed to inviting one another into our classrooms and to giving and receiving constructive feedback. While exchanging this kind of visit can be particularly important for new and untenured faculty who are developing their teaching skills, it is also a great way for more experienced teachers to get new ideas for what we do in our classrooms.

Professor Bridget Baird reports: "Christine Chung (a new faculty member in computer science) and I visited a class taught by Leah Lowe. For both of us it was especially interesting to observe a class in a field considered to be very different from ours. It was an

enjoyable and informative experience and got us both thinking about the commonalities in the two disciplines and the pedagogical intersections."

In order to encourage Connecticut College faculty members to visit one another's classrooms, the CTL initiated an Open Classrooms Program in the fall semester of 2008. The idea is simple: We compile a list of colleagues who are willing to have their classes observed and circulate it to the entire faculty, along with some suggestions (developed by Rick Holmgren of Allegheny College) for observing classes and giving constructive feedback. From the start the response has been wonderful, with an average of 26 faculty members volunteering to open their classrooms each semester.

In order to encourage active use of the list, the CTL picks up the tab for lunch or coffee (up to \$25) when colleagues get together after a class visit to discuss teaching.

For more information about the Open Classrooms Program, contact Abby Van Slyck, Faculty Fellow, Center for Teaching & Learning, at x2731 or aavan@conncoll.edu.

MICROAGGRESSIONS

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there are always some who operate at the intersection of the two.

Theory needs to be related to experience in order to be processed, but beware personalizing the ideas. In assessing individual responsibility, remember that guilt can be narcissistic, an excuse for failing to take action. Instead, think about the diversity that characterizes students' positioning and their consequent vulnerabilities. In every classroom, there are students worrying whether they are smart enough or too smart, assertive or too assertive, and so forth. How can these be incorporated into the conversation about microaggressions?

It is important for white faculty members to do their homework. Faculty of color should not have to educate their colleagues about these issues. Similarly, it is important to know a little about your students, to know with whom you are speaking. And always seek multiple spaces. If the course subject matter or the assigned materials don't allow for discussion, find another route and another space.

Think deeply about the level of pain that students endure in the classroom and in the College community. What are we doing to our students? How dare we place them in that position? More than the purely intellectual or academic role of the student, consider the full experience of college life.

Help us title our newsletter contest!

What should the CTL call its new newsletter? Send your ideas to Michael Reder (rededer@conncoll.edu) or Leah Lowe (leah.lowe@conncoll.edu) by May 24. The winner, who will be announced at Camp Teach & Learn, May 25-27, will receive our sincere gratitude and five books on teaching from the CTL Library.