

# Teaching/Learning Matters

ASA's Newsletter for the



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## SECTION CHAIR'S CORNER

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### Be Involved in the Bigger Picture of Teaching, Learning and SoTL

As sociologists, we are well able to --and aware of the importance of-- seeing the connections between individual behaviors and the larger social and historical context. It is important that we see this bigger picture not only for our disciplinary research or the topics we teach or working in the academy in general but, also, in terms of teaching, learning, and the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) in higher education. Our local teaching, learning, and SoTL do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, what happens with our teaching, our students' learning, and our SoTL work is impacted by the history of these activities in higher education, by their status in 2010, by the characteristics of higher education in the United States, by funding situations, by the influences of international movements related to teaching, learning, and SoTL, by the activities of other major organizations (e.g., the Carnegie Foundation or accreditation agencies), by developments in other fields (e.g., computer technology or social psychology or the biology of the human brain), by professional organizations in and beyond sociology, by media interpretations and presentations of these issues, and so on!

It is critical, then, that we all are more aware of and involved in this bigger picture. For example, consider getting to know more about and helping out with the committee on teaching or teaching sessions at your regional sociology meetings. Have you ever attended a cross-discipline teaching-learning conference (e.g., Lilly Conference or Teaching Professor Conference)? What about joining the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) and attending the annual conference? Publishing in *Teaching Sociology* is important but have you shared your teaching, learning, and SoTL work in a cross-discipline publication such as *College Teaching* or *The International Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*? Are you aware of the informative

discussions about teaching, learning, and SoTL that occur across disciplinary, institutional, and national borders? What about picking up a copy of, for example, *The Art of Changing the Brain* by Zull to learn more about how your teaching may or may not help create learning based on brain research? You can easily 'google' any of these and many other organizations, conferences, journals, and books for more information.

One specific example of involvement in the bigger picture is the 30 plus members of the ISSOTL Sociology Internal Interest Group. We are sociologists who belong to ISSOTL, many of us also belong to ASA and STLS. We meet virtually and at the annual ISSOTL meetings to enhance SoTL in sociology through an action agenda (e.g., offering paper and panel sessions at ISSOTL, networking and collaborating) and by learning more about SoTL across institutions and across nations. We have just begun to think about the possibility of an edited book on what sociology can offer sociologists and colleagues in other disciplines in terms of doing SoTL. We welcome new members to our group. Working in such settings --beyond the local-- reminds us of the importance of social context as we learn about, for example, the long (or short) history of teaching movements in other disciplines or the differences in the meaning of SoTL in different U. S. institutions or in other nations, or the signature pedagogies of other disciplines compared to our own.

Of course, your involvement beyond your local institution in the ASA Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology is also part of this bigger picture and I urge you to renew your membership in ASA and STLS (online at [asanet.org](http://asanet.org)). In addition, consider learning more about--and becoming more involved in-- the larger social context surrounding the work you do in teaching, learning, and SoTL.

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## 2009-2010 OFFICERS AND COUNCIL MEMBERS FOR THE SECTION ON TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SOCIOLOGY

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

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As I write this note, I am sitting here enjoying the sunshine. We have not had "sunshine" in Ohio for almost six weeks. It has been a long winter for us and I am so looking forward to Spring Quarter. In the past two years, the geographic location of our college has had an impact on teaching and learning. In fall of 2008, we were hit by a dry hurricane and school was closed for almost a week and many of our students were without power for two weeks. Since we are on quarter system, this did impact teaching and learning for fall quarter. In fall of 2009 (partly related to geographic location), we were hit with the flu epidemics and many students as well as faculty missed classes. Finally, this past winter we have had at least three weeks with some type of closing or delay and once again it has impacted teaching and learning. This experience has helped me reflect on the importance of the World Wide Web and "distance" education. While the pros and cons can be debated, it was evident to me that the availability of sources on the web assisted in helping students continue to learn despite not being able to come to class. It also reinforced the fact that there still remains a gap in access to computers and resources for students in poverty. I am inviting articles about distance education for our next newsletter (my final edition as editor). In this issue, there is an interesting discussion about distance mentoring and the possibilities that it may have for future faculty mentoring. I am looking forward to your comments and hope to see future articles on the topic of distance education and learning.

**Kathy Rowell**

**Newsletter Editor, 2009-10**

## Special Column: Distance Mentoring

Guest Columnists:

Margaret Weigers Vitullo, American Sociological Association, [vitullo@asanet.org](mailto:vitullo@asanet.org)

Diane Pike, Augsburg College, [pike@augsborg.edu](mailto:pike@augsborg.edu)

### "Distance Mentoring – Early Reflections on the DRG Mentors Program" Margaret Weigers Vitullo, ASA

The importance of mentoring on success has been widely documented across numerous professional settings, including teaching (Martin 2002). Atkinson (2000) sees mentoring as a key element in nurturing successful sociologist teachers, and Keith and Moore

(1995) found mentoring to be strongly linked to graduate students' confidence and performance as sociologists as well as their satisfaction with their graduate program. While mentoring is now widely acknowledged to contribute to professional success, it is also widely noted that the availability of mentoring is gendered, structurally conditioned, and unequally distributed. Moreover, with increasing economic pressures and increasing reliance on adjunct and part-time faculty, the availability of mentors becomes even more restricted (Johnson 2002).

While hardly a panacea, distance mentoring may provide new points of access to effective mentoring. According to the originators of MentorNet, an e-mentoring program designed to support women studying science and engineering, distance mentoring "is creating a revolution in mentoring that will continue to expand through the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (Singe and Muller 2006:107).

In February of 2009 the ASA Department Resources Group (DRG) began a distance mentoring program for people holding leadership roles within sociology departments. In this article I briefly describe the DRG Mentors Program and some of the strengths and challenges of distance mentoring that have become apparent during the first year of the program.

Members of the ASA Department Resources Group assist sociology departments with a variety of activities such as program review, curriculum development, assessment, workshops and department retreats. The DRG Mentors Program is designed to provide one-on-one support, feedback, advice, and coaching to sociologists who have taken on a leadership roles within a department, such as becoming chairperson, division coordinator, or graduate studies director. People who are interested in getting a DRG mentor fill out an on-line application and send in their vitae. They are then matched with a DRG member whose background and experiences suggest that they would be able to provide insight and advice to the applicant. Once the mentor and mentee have agreed to work together, their meetings generally take place through phone conversations, email, and web-based video conferencing (such as Skype). The length of mentoring relationships is negotiated on a case-by-case basis, but typically extends over six to twelve months. Having a clear goal for a mentorship is a fundamental part of creating a successful experience both for the mentor and the protégé (Zachary 2000). In some mentorships there is wide latitude in the kinds of goals that the relationship supports. However, because of the specific mission of the ASA Department Resources Group, the DRG Mentors Program has a closely delimited goal—to help individuals become

more effective actors within a particular institutional role.

Although a formal evaluation of the DRG mentor program has not yet been conducted, several advantages and a few disadvantages of this distance-mentoring program have already become apparent. Among the advantages is the possibility of creating a mentorship that avoids the interpersonal dynamics of a specific department. Department chairs may find it difficult to identify an appropriate source from which to seek advice and counsel. Professional authority, ethics and confidentiality, and resource dependence can limit a chair's ability to request advice from other department members, former chairs, the dean, and even chairs from other departments in the same institution. Similar issues may arise for directors of graduate studies and faculty charged with leading department-wide projects, such as developing assessment plans. By making it possible to establish a mentorship beyond the department, and even the institution, the DRG distance mentoring program seems to be providing a safe place for department leaders to acknowledge their concerns and issues and seek advice.

The DRG mentoring program has also made it possible to seek "matches" across a broader pool of potential mentors and mentees than is generally possible within one institutional setting. Imagine a new department chair who is a recently-tenured faculty member in a small department where the other faculty are all full professors approaching retirement age. Now imagine the position of that new chair as the dean demands an increase the number of majors, while the senior faculty resist proposed changes to the curriculum designed to be responsive to students' concerns about career outcomes. While this situation may seem unique, it is reflective of the kinds of challenges new department chairs often face. The DRG mentors program has made it possible to reach across institutions to connect new department chairs with more seasoned chairs who have had similar experiences.

Creating a meaningful sense of connection across distance is one challenge that has become apparent in the DRG mentors program. However, it appears that using video conferencing (for example, through Skype) can help foster a sense of connection because the full array of facial expressions, gestures, and other non-verbal cues are allowed into the communication space of the distance mentorship. Another challenge that has arisen from time to time over the past year of DRG mentorships has been a tendency for some of the mentorships to falter from lack of regular contact. When both parties in a mentorship work in the same institution, their paths have the potential to cross during the regular activities of the day. But when busy

partners in a distance mentorship are working in different states, much less different institutions, meaningful contact must be intentional and planned. Without such planning, long "silences" in the relationship may result.

The first year of experience with the DRG mentors program suggests that distance mentoring can provide important benefits, not simply as a second-best substitute for face-to-face mentoring, but in some cases, an actual improvement over it. That said, there are also additional challenges to creating a successful distance mentorship. While a formal evaluation of the program has not yet been conducted, it would be worthwhile to see if department leaders who had DRG mentors described their experiences in their institutional roles differently than sociologists who were in similar institutional roles but did not have a mentor. It would also be instructive to compare a group of department leaders who had distance mentors with a group of leaders who had face-to-face meetings with mentors within their institutions. Finally, it would be wonderful to explore the use of distance mentoring as it relates to fostering the scholarship of teaching and learning in sociology. In her article, "The Future of Sociology is Teaching? A Vision of the Possible," Atkinson states that "doctoral students who will be teaching must be taught how to do so effectively and must be mentored *in the classroom*" (2000:330 – emphasis added). Mentoring teachers "in the classroom" seems to suggest a face-to-face interaction that distance mentoring generally would not allow. But my early experiences with the DRG Mentors program leads me to think that there are ways that distance mentoring could contribute positively to the development of teacher scholars in the discipline, avoiding some of the interpersonal dynamics within a given department and by providing a larger and more diverse pool of potential mentors.

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#### Mentoring From Afar Diane Pike, Augsburg College

"I can tell I'm getting older", I said to my husband. No fool, he merely smiled and said, "How so?" "I think I'm actually being really helpful to the person I'm mentoring through ASA." "I'm sure you are," he replied--and being the kind of guy he is, he probably meant it for *both* statements.

For the past 9 months I have been working with a colleague through the DRG Mentors Program. The relationship has been rewarding for both of us--although to protect the privacy of the connection you are going to have to trust me on my interpretation of my partner's experience. My evidence rests on the explicit feedback ("the idea we worked out was great", "the department meeting went much better than expected" "I would never have thought to do *that!*"), reports of the actual progress, and my own sense of our connection and genuine dialogue. Thanks in large part to my work and training as a DRG reviewer, I apparently finally have enough good ideas to be helpful to someone else.

Of course, the success is relational. The colleague whom I mentor had the savvy to request this DRG service, recognized that the challenges faced were significant, and is very open and thoughtful. We connect easily in terms of conversation and our stylistic approaches mesh pretty well. We are both straightforward and both make an effort to listen. The listening part is critical as those of you who have examined the formal concept of mentoring know. We are both a little impatient with situations where the interests of students are subordinated to the demands of organizational administration and where with the model of faculty members as autonomous agents sometimes overshadows the model of a collaborative departmental team. But this is where experience helps. Definitely older, and somewhat wiser, I am able to share my strategies and knowledge for how to respond to these challenges. My colleague has yet to present an issue that I have not encountered in some

way over my career, although any particular context is always unique. Although problems may feel special, usually, they are not. So while I don't always have the perfect answer, the opportunity to be supportive and useful is real.

Operationally, we have made this project work in the following ways. First, I made a commitment to give this project a year to get my colleague through the first full cycle of hiring, FTE allocation, department meetings, Dean meetings, and coping. Other DRG mentor relationships are likely shorter and more focused, but in this context the cycle approach makes sense. Second, we initially "met" by phone and then made an effort to meet in person at the ASA annual meetings. Our breakfast together was enormously valuable (as sociologists you can easily figure out why). Audio Skype is used for our conversations since it is less tiring than the phone and we communicate by email. Third, there is no set schedule for when we talk. Conversations are driven by institutional timelines and the tasks that need attention. Most of our contact is either initiated by my colleague or determined at the end of a conversation ("let's chat again in two weeks and see where we are"). Occasionally I send an article from the Chronicle or sometimes check in by a quick email as a way of saying, "I have your back." Proactive and organized, my colleague has with a good sense of what and when; there have been no issues of calling too often or for too small an item. Our conversations are often long and substantive and, for me, very interesting because of the goal of solving a problem or together analyzing a situation; those goals are complemented by my role as a supportive, confidential colleague. Finally, the set up through DRG and the careful matching of client and service have worked for us. Despite being a face-to-face devotee for all manner of teaching and learning, I have been pleased with how well this relationship has worked from a distance.

For those of you considering this DRG service, I highly recommend it as a mentor opportunity and can easily imagine using it as a client. It is rewarding to see a colleague's progress and to recognize that my experiences can have broader positive impact. Of course, the personal payoff is that I am learning—honing skills in listening and asking questions rather than always analyzing and advising. The challenges for younger colleagues whose careers are unfolding within an environment quite different than mine was 25 years ago is something I now understand more fully. I am enjoying this opportunity and encourage you to offer your services. If this type of *pro bono* work is part of my payback for a career in sociology for which I am most grateful, what a deal.

## NOTES ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Guest Columnists:

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NOTE: The editor is currently seeking articles on the scholarship of teaching and learning for the Summer Edition.

**Learning Research Methodology Through  
Experiential and Service-Learning:  
The Winters Heritage House Museum Project**  
**Michele Lee Kozimor-King, Tiffany S. Fackler, and  
Stephen R. Kauffman, Elizabethtown College**  
(This paper was presented at the Eastern Sociological  
Society Annual Meeting in Boston, 2010)

*Overall, this project taught me a great deal about creating a questionnaire and working with a team. It showed me how much time and effort goes into creating a good questionnaire. There were many meetings with professors outside of our department to give us opinions on what should be edited or changed along with leading a focus group to give us some insight as well. This was a great hands-on experience and I would not have changed it for anything in the world! -Tiffany Fackler*

### Introduction

Research by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) and prominent teaching and learning scholars (see Chickering and Gamson 1987, Pascarella and Terenzini 2005, and Kuh 2008) have identified high-impact educational practices that are particularly beneficial for encouraging student engagement, increasing satisfaction, and promoting higher levels of persistence. Some of these "good" practices include student-faculty contact, active learning, prompt feedback, high expectations, cooperation among students, and service-learning. Recently, Michele Lee Kozimor-King has successfully incorporated these "good" practices into the challenging Methods of Social Research and Social Statistics course sequence. These changes were aimed at developing concrete skills while encouraging more connectedness to the topic, between students, and with the professor. Assessment results of the *Winters Heritage House Community Survey Project (WHHCS)* indicate that the year-long assignment successfully bridged the gap between academic research and service to the community through the use of high-impact educational practices.

### Learning Methodology Through Service

The concept of service-learning has a long history within the American system of higher education. Interestingly, service-learning dates back to 1862 when Abraham Lincoln signed the First Morrill Act establishing Land Grant institutions. These colleges offered students the opportunity for “hands-on” learning by working on public land. Although service-learning increased in popularity as an educational practice, the term service-learning wasn’t used until 1967 when it was coined by Robert Sigmon and William Ramsey (Titlebaum, Williamson, Daprano, Baer, Brahler 2004). While the terms service-learning and volunteering are often used interchangeably, there is an important distinction between the two terms in the literature. According to the National Service Learning Clearinghouse (2010), service learning “is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.” The use of service-learning in two advanced-level research courses at Elizabethtown College, Methods of Social Research and Sociological Statistics, clearly exemplifies this definition.

Student participation in the WHHCS project clearly illustrates the Elizabethtown College vision of service-learning. At Elizabethtown College, students are intentionally educated for lives of service and leadership. Student involvement in the WHHCS project enables students to understand the virtues of research methodology and application of social statistics in a real-life setting outside of the classroom. For this project, students, as representatives of Elizabethtown College, go out into the community and provide a beneficial service to a local organization – namely the Winters Heritage House Museum. The Winters Heritage House is the oldest, restored log structure in the Elizabethtown area providing a multitude of activities for the community members. For many years, the museum has provided internships for students and site locations for Elizabethtown College’s *First-Year Service Day*, *Into the Streets*, and other service-learning programs. The WHHCS project allows students to assist the Winters Heritage House Museum while applying knowledge gained in the Methods of Social Research and Social Statistics classes.

While completing the survey was essential for the Methods of Social Research class curriculum, the completion of the WHHCS project is even more important for the Winters Heritage House Museum. The survey results and subsequent report provided necessary information needed to assist the Board of Directors as they plan for the organization’s future. More specifically, this exploratory research provided the museum with basic information about the

familiarity, participation, and interest in the museum of the Elizabethtown community (Elizabethtown Area School District households, local homeschooling families, Masonic Village residents, and Elizabethtown College faculty, staff, and students).

### The WHHCS Project

It is widely acknowledged that sociology students enter classes in research methods and social statistics with “statistics anxiety.” DeCesare (2007) examined empirical evidence of “statistics anxiety” and recommends that educators rethink the evaluation process. He recommends alternatives to traditional exams, such as semester-long projects, daily homework, and group projects, to relieve some of the anxiety.

The WHHCS project is one example of an alternative evaluation tool used in the course. The grade for this project incorporated attendance at mandatory meetings, reflection of a visit to the Museum, timely completion and quality of the group portion of the project, written reports and reflections, and a final paper assessing the student’s ability to defend the decisions made by the group while relating the experience to class material (similar in format to a take-home exam).

In Methods of Social Research and Social Statistics, students are taught the basic concepts and skills of social research. Some of the key concepts taught in the class are the design of an effective research project, conceptualization, distribution, and collection of a survey instrument, and analysis of data using statistics. By participating in the WHHCS students are able to apply the material taught in the class. While the project is part of the Methods of Social Research and Social Statistics curriculum, students are not limited to class boundaries; rather they actively worked with faculty from multiple departments (i.e. Business, Political Science, and Social Work) who provided necessary feedback, helpful suggestions, and disciplinary perspectives on the questionnaire and research design.

The WHHCS had three main learning outcomes: (1) provide an experiential learning opportunity for students enrolled in the skill-based Methods of Social Research and Social Statistics courses; (2) to involve students enrolled in Methods of Social Research and Social Statistics with a research based service-learning project; and (3) to provide the Winters Heritage House Museum with information about the level of community awareness, interest, and participation in the museum and museum programming.

While the majority of the students enrolled in Methods of Social Research were majors and minors within the Sociology and Anthropology Department, the actual fields of study within the class is a diverse mix. Majors

enrolled in the class (other than Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice) include Communications, Business Management, Engineering, Marketing, Accounting, and History. The wide range of student disciplinary interest provided a wealth of resources for the project and was a good example of interdisciplinary connections. The interdisciplinary nature of the project also allowed students to see the importance of research methodology as it applied to various fields of study.

The initial phase of the project was started during the first meeting of Methods of Social Research class fall 2008. Kozimor-King designed the project to simulate a team research study. In this case, Kozimor-King was the principle investigator of the project and, as such, oversaw the work of the rest of the staff. The students of Methods of Social Research and Social Statistics were the staff assigned to different groups to work on specific portions of the project. Groups for the project included the Institutional Review Board, Research Design, Sampling, Funding/Budget, Distribution, Questionnaire, Research Poster/Editing, and Data Entry/Public Communication. Each group of 3 to 5 students has determined the goals and tasks needed to contribute to the completion of the project based on class materials. The Research Design Group, for example, met with the Steering Committee of the Winters Heritage House Museum in September 2008 to discuss the design for the project including the goals, target population, and time dimension. Prior to their meeting, each group gave the Research Design members questions they needed to be asked for their portion of the project. Immediately following the meeting, the Research Design group gave a class presentation of the results of the meeting and wrote a report about the meeting which each group maintains access to.

Beginning in January 2009, the Social Statistics class finished the data collection and began the data entry and analysis phase of the project. Data entry and analyses were completed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) as part of the class curriculum. Results from the completed project were presented to the Elizabethtown College community on *Scholarship Day* on April 21, 2009 and to the Board of Trustees on April 24, 2009. Students also presented the results of their research at professional conferences including the Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting on March 20, 2009 and Lebanon Valley College Social Science Undergraduate Conference on April 4, 2009.

A report was provided to the Winters Heritage House Museum Survey Steering Committee at the end of the fall semester. Phase two of the project was completed at the end of Spring 2009 semester culminating in a

bound written report. One copy of the report was presented to the Winters Heritage House Museum staff. Two other copies were retained. One copy remains in the Sociology and Anthropology Department and the second was donated to the High Library.

#### WHHCS Project Assessment

The Methods of Social Research and Social Statistics classes have been evaluated by the Individual Development Educational Assessment (IDEA). Information about the IDEA survey and reliability can be accessed at [www.idea.ksu.edu](http://www.idea.ksu.edu). IDEA scores on relevant learning outcome measures were examined for two years prior to the WHHCS project and the year of the project. Written comments from students both on the IDEA forms and in the final assessment paper were also examined.

Results from the IDEA evaluations suggest that the WHHCS Project successfully incorporated the "good" practices associated with high-impact activities. Students rated the course above the national average on the following measures:

- Encouraged student-faculty interaction outside of the class
- Related course material to real life situations
- Introduced stimulating ideas about the subject
- Demonstrated the importance and significance of the subject matter
- Involved students in "hands-on" projects such as research, case studies, or "real life" activities
- Asked students to help each other understand ideas or concepts

In addition, Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3 illustrate striking improvements in the practices of collaborative and active learning. In fall 2005, the mean score for the Formation of Teams to Facilitate Learning was 3.6 and increased substantively to 4.8 in fall 2008. Similarly, there was an increase in the mean score from 3.5 to 4.6 for Acquiring Skills in Working with Others and 4.6 to 4.9 in Involving Students in Hands-On Projects. It must be noted that while no substantive increases were found for other indicators, the scores did not deviate from previous years which were already above the national average.

Open-ended comments also support the effectiveness of the project for achieving learning outcomes. Below are examples of written student feedback.

*This course was challenging but very rewarding. I really enjoyed how much the class bonded while working on projects together. Dr. Kozimor-King showed a genuine interest in helping each student learn and grow.*

*Working on the Winters Heritage House Community Survey allowed me to gain a better understanding of the research process and how it can be applied to assist an actual business. As part of the questionnaire team, I learned the value of knowing the objectives of the business and finding creative and simple ways of asking questions that can gather the needed information. Each step of the questionnaire development brought its own challenges to our team, and I discovered the value of team work and the importance of having many different perspectives from others to improve the wording and presentation of the survey.*

*The Winters Heritage House Community Survey Project gave us valuable, hands-on experience. Being part of the Research Design Group provided us the opportunity to work with a client and be the spokespeople for our class. Our group worked with the Winters Heritage House to find out their ideas, wants, and needs from the survey. The remainder of the project relied on our group to get useful and effective information. This project has taught me how much teamwork and cooperation goes into running a successful survey.*

Finally, the WHHCS project provided students with an active learning experience which alleviated "statistics anxiety," encouraged collaboration, enhanced student-faculty contact, provided prompt feedback, and facilitated the development of strong time management skills. In summary, this one project clearly incorporated many of the "good" practices recommended for student engagement. Engaged the students were! This group of motivated students dedicated countless hours over two semesters to the unique academic service-learning project. Each member of the class worked interdependently on every phase of the project throughout the year. In addition to the hours spent on the project, they took the initiative to present the results of the project at professional conferences without any direct compensation. Due to the demand of the current students in Methods of Social Research and Social Statistics, the project was continued for 2009-2010 with qualitative interviews and focus groups. The saga continues...

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#### Tables

Table 1: Formed Teams to Facilitate Learning			
		N	Mean
SO 330 Methods	Fall 05	17	3.6
SO 331 Stats	Spring 06	8	3.3
SO 330 Methods	Fall 06	17	3.9
SO 331 Stats	Spring 07	8	4
SO 330 Methods	Fall 08	18	4.8
SO 331 Stats	Spring 09	15	4.5

Table 2: Involved Students in Hands-On Projects			
		N	Mean
SO 330 Methods	Fall 05	17	4.6
SO 331 Stats	Spring 06	8	5.0
SO 330 Methods	Fall 06	17	4.2
SO 331 Stats	Spring 07	8	4.3
SO 330 Methods	Fall 08	18	4.9
SO 331 Stats	Spring 09	15	4.9

Table 3: Acquired Skills in Working with Others			
		N	Mean
SO 330 Methods	Fall 05	17	3.5
SO 331 Stats	Spring 06	8	3.0
SO 330 Methods	Fall 06	17	3.5
SO 331 Stats	Spring 07	8	4.4
SO 330 Methods	Fall 08	18	4.6
SO 331 Stats	Spring 09	15	4.7

#### TEACHING SOCIOLOGY WITH JEAN PIAGET Gustavo Ant3n, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina

"One must not forget that the education of new generations and their integration into society is the major social phenomenon and that the first concern of every revolutionary movement (there are a plenty of

others!) is to act on the rising generations and to reorganize teaching"

Jean Piaget "Preface" to Sociological Studies (1995).

An important obstacle when we have to introduce students to the main topics of Jean Piaget is the fame he has as a simple child psychologist. But Jean Piaget also had much to say about sociological theory. During his life, he tried to face epistemological problems on experimental bases and establish a theory about how human beings build knowledge.

In part of his important work as a scientific researcher, he reflected on the implications that sociological problems has with epistemology. He spent a lot of his time and effort researching the relations between sociology, psychology and epistemology. Many of his essays are based on his sociological lectures given in France. These essays can be examined in his book, Sociological Studies (Piaget, 1995). In these essays his dialogues on classical sociological theory with Marx, Pareto, and especially Durkheim are presented.

So, we have to think that his approach to children was just a research strategy to solve other problems of knowledge. As an epistemologist, he considered that the problems presented by psychology were part of a "sociology of children."

Though we cannot affirm that Jean Piaget was a sociologist or a teacher, his work has influenced much of our understanding about the learning process, especially at the K- 12 levels. However, it is evident that Piaget has much to offer about how we teach and how students learn at the university level.

As teachers at the University of Buenos Aires in Argentina, we tried to adopt a constructivist perspective in the teaching and learning process. Our methods and teaching techniques focuses as the central problem not to transmit verbally and rigorously knowledge accumulated about social theory.

On the one hand, one of the principal problems of teaching is to understand the precise operational level of students. In other words, we need to understand what principal notions our students have learned in their education as well as understand what levels they can strive towards in the future. As Piaget used to say, "the most important problem of all teachers is preparing students not to repeat what already is known but for preparing them to produce original knowledge". This problem implies the need for a teaching technique that redefines the roles commonly accepted by teachers and students in the classroom and at the university level.

For example, it is common for students to expect that teachers know everything and that their role as teachers is to transmit knowledge. When teachers try

to change this classroom norm and focus on helping students become autonomous thinkers and ask students to "think" on their own and become participants in the knowledge building process, students may perceive the teacher as not "doing his or her job." This is why redefining roles inside the classroom is the first step to transform the learning process in a truly collective and social business.

As Marín notes "the obligation of teachers at the classroom level it is not transmitting certain contents in a shaping discourse but to guide, conduct and help students to advance in his individual process of knowledge assimilation. In this way, learning shouldn't be an *obligation* of students but a *right* that they should exercise (Marín, 2005)".

For that reason, we have taken a different approach in teaching research methods in our department. We have removed formal sanctions and evaluations from our classes. We do not evaluate students with standardized tests nor obligate them to attend classes. We think and strongly believe that students must feel completely free to think and participate in class. In this way, during the year we just have only three or four master classes. We prepared practical (problem based) exercises that are presented at the beginning of the classes as students arrive. Students become part of a research team and collaborate to reorganize images and apply the concepts of a sociological theory they freely choose, examining alternatives, test with other students (often use interviewing methods and techniques), employing it in the field, building a database, processing the information and writing a research report.

In sum, we try to engage students in a real research process and the heterogeneous actions implicit in the process as they become part of a research team. The main task is that students have to know that researching presupposes a collaboration of minds. We are more focused in the *images*, practices and expectations students have, not to control but helping them to learn, because, as Piaget used to say "to think we have to be many".

#### References:

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## PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP FOR NEW TEACHERS OF SOCIOLOGY

### The Best Teachers We Can Be: Learning Scholarly Teaching

The ASA Section on Teaching and Learning Pre-  
Conference Seminar

ASA Annual Meeting Atlanta 2010

8am to 5 pm on Friday August 13, 2010

Designed for graduate students and newer teachers of sociology, this faculty development opportunity provides knowledge, resources, modeling of good practices, and inspiration. Throughout a day of engagement with experienced colleagues and with each other, mini-workshops, keynotes, panels, discussions, roundtables and networking are structured to provide an integrated learning experience grounded in the scholarship of teaching and learning. We invite colleagues at the earlier stages of their teaching careers who are particularly dedicated to the science and art of teaching sociology to become part of this community of scholarly teachers.

Please see the application form and registration information at: <http://www2.asanet.org/sectionteach/>

Acceptances are made on a rolling basis but we would appreciate applications and registration fees no later than **June 15<sup>th</sup>**; space is limited. Early submission is appreciated and ensures that there is space for you. (Deadline for travel grants was March 12<sup>th</sup>)

### ASA Pre-conference on Teaching and Learning (To date) Seminar Schedule 2010

*Our goals for this seminar are to model good practices, learn from all participants, and build skills and knowledge in scholarly teaching.*

8 AM Light Breakfast/Welcome and Substantive Introduction

8:30 Small Group Analysis: First Day of Class and Impression Management

9:00 Keynote: Professor Ed Kain, Southwestern University

9:30 Leading Effective Discussion (based on reading sent to participants)

*Break*

10:30 Concurrent Roundtables: 6-8 options offered by invited colleagues

12:00 Lunch break; opportunities to cluster by interest areas

1:15 Reflection and Refocus

1:30 Presenting Content: Good Ideas for Didactic Pedagogy

2:45 "The Doctor Is In": Teaching Consultations

*Break*

3:30 Second Round of Concurrent Roundtables

4:30 Next Steps

5:00 Seminar Closing

(5:30 an informal gathering of those not completely exhausted)

Participants are expected to attend the full session. Questions welcome. For additional detail, please contact [pike@augsborg.edu](mailto:pike@augsborg.edu)

## NEWS AND NOTES

As the New Year starts, I wanted to share with the listserv about some changes to the journal, Teaching Sociology. With the January 2010 edition, we are the first of the ASA journals to transition to Sage Publishing, the new ASA publishing partner. That transition has brought some changes to the journal in look (a new cover, and a new typesetting style), but even more, some changes in how the manuscript reviewing process will occur. So I thought I would try to get the word out to as many people as possible, in as many ways as possible.

To submit to the journal, please go to this URL: <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ts>

If you already have an account with ScholarOne, use that login and password; if you have an account but have forgotten your password, it will send you an email with directions about what to do next. If you do not have an account, there is an easy process to create an account.

As part of the submission process, you will be asked for your address, email address, work phone, etc. You will also get to list several keywords which capture the essence of your manuscript. There are some other steps too, but they are pretty straightforward. Let me know if anyone has troubles, okay?

If you are asked by me to be a reviewer, there is a parallel process. You will receive a software-generated email from me asking you to review and you can reply. The email has a link to logging in and seeing the manuscript if you agree to review it. Reviews will also be submitted via the ScholarOne software system.

It's a bit of a learning curve -- but we're all learning it together! And Sage's staff has been so helpful as my Managing Editor and I have learned/are learning the software, that I know they will continue that help.

In time, there will also be some changes to the TS webpage at ASA -- but that might not be for several months. If you have ideas for the website, I would love to hear them!

And the great news is -- just a week into 2010, we already have had 2 new manuscripts submitted using the system!

I greatly appreciate every one of you who has already answered the call to review when I have asked you to since July, when I became Editor-elect. And thank you to the Editorial Board for their help and support and Glenn Muschert, my Deputy Editor as well. But most importantly, I want to thank Liz Grauerholz, the past editor. She has been so patient with me as I have learned. Thank you, Liz.

Let me know what you think when you receive your January edition of *Teaching Sociology*,

Kathleen Lowney, Editor, *Teaching Sociology*,  
[teachingsociology@valdosta.edu](mailto:teachingsociology@valdosta.edu)

## CALLS FOR.....

### **Submissions Sought**

Please submit suggestions for the summer newsletter to Kathy Rowell. Deadline for submissions is May 1, 2010. Articles on distance education are of special interest. Suggestions for articles, regular features, news items to share with other members, and any other ideas are encouraged and welcome! Help me make this the best Section newsletter of the ASA.

### **Call for Papers Special Issue of *Teaching Sociology* on Assessment**

How do we know that the things we are doing as teachers are having the desired impact on our students as learners? For some, the transition from being a scholar of teaching and learning to engaging in effective student learning assessment is natural and straight-forward. In fact, for many individual departments and individual sociologists, student learning assessment is a part of the cultural fabric of their teaching and scholarly activities. For others, however, the assessment of student learning is a daunting task: the concepts and methodology seem foreign or the political economy of assessment on their campus undermines their views of the best ways of organizing their activities as faculty members. For most, it is somewhere in-between. The focus of assessment activities can be at the graduate and/or the undergraduate levels.

We invite submissions on a wide range of topics related to the assessment of student learning.

1. Notes describing successful assessment activities based on what we know about the scholarship of teaching and learning;

2. Notes about successful assessment activities in departments that can serve as models for similar departments;

3. Papers describing the implementation of student learning assessment plans for an entire sociology curriculum that have "closed the loop" (identified one or more goals for a sociology curriculum, operationalized those goals, collected and analyzed these data, and used the results to inform teaching and/or curriculum.)

4. Theoretically informed papers that place assessment activities within larger context of changes taking place within higher education and suggest ways in which departments and faculty can develop effective assessment activities that enhance both student learning and faculty control over their worklife.

Submissions should be uploaded to the ScholarOne-*Teaching Sociology* website:

<http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ts>. Submitters should write a brief note to the editor that this submission is for the special edition. Thank you.

If you have questions about the special edition, feel free to ask the Special Editors, Jeffrey Chin, [chin@lemoyne.edu](mailto:chin@lemoyne.edu) and Mary Senter, [mary.senter@cmich.edu](mailto:mary.senter@cmich.edu), Guest Editors. They welcome discussions and questions about possible notes or papers prior to submission.

**The deadline for submissions is June 1, 2010.**

### **Join the TEACHSOC Listserv**

Established in 1995 by Jeff Chin and Kathleen McKinney, the Teaching Sociology E-mail List – teachsoc – provides a place to discuss and distribute news on teaching sociology. Teachsoc is open to all individuals interested in pedagogy, curriculum, and any other issues related to the teaching of sociology at any level. To join us, please send the command:

### **Subscribe teachsoc Alfred Weber**

In the body of an email message addressed to – [teachsoc@googlegroups.com](mailto:teachsoc@googlegroups.com) substituting your name for Max's little brother, of course.

### **Renew Your Membership!**

We encourage all section members to join us in recruiting new people to join the section. As Diane Pike is known for saying, EVERY sociologist who teaches should belong to the section. Help us in "spreading the word" about the section and its many benefits. We are the leaders in the scholarship of teaching and learning work as well as some of the most talented teachers. Additionally, the section newsletter provides compelling

and interesting items to section members that you cannot get anywhere else. Finally, the journal of *Teaching Sociology* represents our interests through its editors (who have all been section members) as well as through its content.

### **Automatic Enrollment in Section E-Mail**

When STLS section members pay their annual dues, including Section membership dues, their email address is automatically added to the email list. This list is used by Section officers to send messages to the entire membership. However, this is not a listserv and therefore membership is not able to send messages to other members. While Section officers value this opportunity to communicate more readily with our membership, we recognize that some of you may prefer to be removed from the list.

**To remove yourself from the STLS membership list for mailings**, send a message to: [infoservice@asanet.org](mailto:infoservice@asanet.org) with the following statement in the **body** of your message – ***"Please remove my name and email address from the Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology announcement list."*** Then add your name and email address to the message.



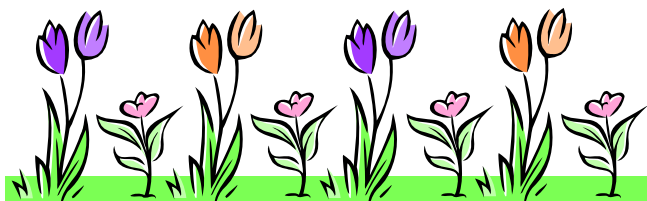
For the most up to date information about the Teaching and Learning Section in Sociology, please check the following websites:

American Sociological Association Meeting website:

<http://www2.asanet.org/sectionteach/annual-mtg.html>

ASA Teaching and Learning in Sociology website:

<http://www2.asanet.org/sectionteach/>



**Mark your calendar...  
Section on Teaching and  
Learning at the ASA  
2010 Annual  
Meetings in Atlanta,  
August 14-17, 2010**

