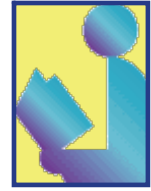




Center for
Excellence in
Learning and
Teaching

Faculty News You Can Use



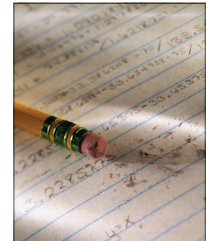
Volume 4: Issue 2 - Winter 2007

A collaborative effort of the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching and the Media Library

“What does learning look like when it’s not going well?”

Lee Shulman delineates what he calls “pedago-pathologies” or the major malfunctions of learning: Amnesia, fantasia and inertia. He describes the reality of where “mislearning” happens:

- ◆ **Amnesia:** Students ordinarily and regularly forget what they have “learned” in their classes. Shulman indicates this is ubiquitous and that it should prompt our examination of what we teach and how we teach, if we work with the realization that much of what they have previously learned is only held in short-term memory.
- ◆ **Fantasia:** Students don’t know what they don’t understand. Illusory understanding or persistent misconceptions can undermine learning less obviously but more dangerously than amnesia. Students are confident that they understand something, even when they don’t.
- ◆ **Inertia:** Students can’t use what they learn. “Inert ideas” are those that are not wrong, but don’t serve the student any useful purpose beyond just being remembered.



So how do you know which of these types of mislearning might be happening in your course? Shulman suggests taking a scholarly approach to teaching, by posing a question about teaching and learning, examining the results and using the results to prompt change or an intervention that is further studied. The following are some sample research questions that can explore where deficits in learning are occurring:

- ◆ **Amnesia:** What knowledge is presumed for this course? How can I assess their prior learning and will it make a difference in their learning? Do regular quizzes improve grades or board scores?
- ◆ **Fantasia:** Does regular group work or self-assessment improve retention or performance? If I use a particular tool for formative assessment, will students realize what they don’t know and correct it?
- ◆ **Inertia:** Can students use the content knowledge to solve novel problems (use deductive or inductive reasoning)? Does using problems or case studies for a difficult concept improve critical thinking?

Scholarly teaching, Shulman avows, is based on current evidence in teaching, and becomes true scholarship when it is critically reviewed by, and shared with, faculty peers. So if you have a teaching problem or a hunch about “learning pathologies,” try developing it into a research question, explore it and publish the results. We can all benefit from what you’ve discovered.

Lee Shulman (past president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the American Educational Research Association and professor of medical education at Michigan State University)

Shulman, L.S. (2004.) Teaching as community property: Essays on higher education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Creating PDF Files

Interested in creating pdf files to upload to NYCC Online for your students on your course group pager? Pdf files were developed and perfected over the last 15 years to allow people to capture and view files from any software application, on any computer system — and share it with anyone around the world that has the free Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on their computer.

There is a free pdf writer called CutePDF Writer which can be used on most simple documents including PowerPoint. Instead of printing to a physical printer, you choose CutePDF Writer as the printer. A dialogue box prompts you to save the file in your directory or on a thumb drive. You can then upload those files to NYCC Online.

All student computer have CutePDF Writer installed. As faculty and staff computers are replaced, CutePDF Writer is automatically set up on the computer. You can tell if your computer has that feature by seeing if it is listed as a printer. If you don't have it as a printer, enter it into Track-IT and someone will install it on your office computer.

Would you like to be able to create pdf files on your personal computer?

Go to <http://www.cutepdf.com/>

Note: The free CutePDF is suitable for creating simple PDF files. It does not handle more advanced PDF features (ie: complicated fill-in forms).

Help! I need my favorite bookmark and I'm not at my home/work computer!

What do I do? Consider using <http://del.icio.us/>

“del.icio.us is a **social bookmarking** website, which means it is designed to allow you to store and share bookmarks on the web, instead of inside your browser. This has several advantages.

First, you can get to your bookmarks from anywhere, no matter whether you're at home, at work, in a library, or on a friend's computer.

Second, you can share your bookmarks publicly, so your friends, coworkers, and other people can view them for reference, amusement, collaboration, or anything else. (Note that you can also mark bookmarks on del.icio.us as private -- only viewable by you -- if you like.)

Third, you can find other people on del.icio.us who have interesting bookmarks and add their links to your own collection. Everyone on del.icio.us chooses to save their bookmarks for a reason. You have access to the links that everyone wants to remember. You can see whether two people have chosen to remember a link, or whether it was useful enough for a thousand people to remember -- which may help you find things that are useful for you, too.” - from <http://del.icio.us/about/>